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Vol. I.

Shorty in Search of His Dad.

By PETER PAD.



Before they had been playing long, the Kid stuck up his foot alongside of the old man's, and on it was painted the words: "Don't give it away."

CHAPTER I.

SHORTY.

You know him.

One of the boys!

You bet. He's the boss boy; the subject and embodiment of more fun and adventure, the hero of more rackets and hurrahs than any other fellow alive.

Yes, of course you know him. He is known everywhere, for he belongs to *The Boys of New York*.

You remember him when first introduced as a foundling waif of an uncertain age and unknown parentage, in a country town in New York State, under the caption of "Shorty; or, Kicked into Good Luck," and after he has been kicked sufficiently

you saw him in "Shorty in Luck," and in various other ways he had become known to the whole world and a good portion of New Jersey.

And you have seen him in company with "Shorty Junior," "Shorty and the Count," and finally saw him settle down with plenty of money, "well fixed" to enjoy life without a trouble.

But of course you had but little faith in his remaining quiet for any length of time, knowing what a restless fellow he is, and so you were greatly surprised at reading the letter which he wrote to the author, and which we published, stating that he would give him the particulars of what has happened him during the past year or two while in search of his father.

It probably seems funny to you that Shorty should have a dad, but of course he had to have one.

It seemed funny to Shorty himself when he first thought of it, but having nothing else to occupy his mind for the time being, and feeling a trifle romantic on account of having read a story in *The Boys of New York*, wherein a waif somewhat like himself eventually found his father, he began to think of his own case and to wonder where his father was.

The more he thought of it, the more he became convinced that he must have had a father sometime, and the firmer became his resolution to find him and see what he was like.

His memory ran back over his checkered life, and as a natural consequence it dwelt as heavy as a

boarding-house flapjack upon Coram, the spot where he was first "taken in" by the overseer of the poor, on whose doorstep he had been left by somebody to become a jolly waif and comical outcast. The very spot, in fact, where the readers of *The Boys of New York* first made his acquaintance.

If anybody knew anything about him, this overseer of the poor must be the man, and so his first move was to visit him for information.

I wish the reader could go back to that overseer's house and see all the surroundings at the time when the barking dog first aroused Mrs. Bilberry to prod her husband to see what it was he was barking at, when investigation produced an odd-looking bundle lying on their front stoop, the center of which was Shorty, then a curious-looking kid; if you could only go back (as you can by reading "Shorty; or, Kicked into Good Luck") you could understand the situation much better.

Without saying a word to anyone, he made his way to Coram, and called upon the old overseer of the poor, whom he had not seen for thirty years almost.

He and his wife occupied the same house, lived in the same style; he was still overseer of the poor, and they even had a son of the old yellow dog (himself an old dog now,) who introduced Shorty by barking at him, as he lay wrapped in a bundle on the doorstep.

It was about noon when he arrived at the old house. The old yellow dog began to bark when he got within a quarter of a mile of the place, and kept it up until he reached the front gate, when he slunk away behind the house, where he continued barking until after the old woman had kicked him several times.

There was something about the place that looked familiar to him, and for a moment Shorty felt his heart coming up so that he could almost bite it, for these were the scenes of his earliest recollections.

He pounded upon the front door smartly, but he had to do so three or four times before he could make anybody hear him. Then an old man came to the door, followed by an old woman. He held an old scrap of a story paper in his hand, that might have been the same one he was reading on that night thirty years ago, when Shorty was left on his stoop, and if he had not yet learned the scrap of romance by heart, he had probably not yet settled in his mind how the story turned out, any more than he had on that eventful occasion.

But they were both changed so by age, that Shorty did not know them, although he took it for granted that they were Mr. and Mrs. Bilberry, and so he addressed them while they stood there with open eyes and mouths gazing at the queer-looking, nobbily dressed little man who smiled upon them.

"Halloo! be you Mr. Bilberry?" he asked.

"Waal, yas. Who mought yu be?" queried the old man, while the yellow dog ventured near enough to smell of Shorty's shins.

"Me? I might be the Count Joannes or the Cardiff Giant, but I arn't. I'm Shorty."

"Yu don't go for tu say so!"

"Yes, I do," said he, giving the dog a kick.

"Waal, who's Shorty?" asked the old woman.

"Don't know who Shorty is! Must be yer education's been neglected. Let me in an' I'll tell yer who I be, an' see if yer know more'n I do."

"Don't you let him in, Jehial, for he may be a robber or a masked burglar or somethin'," said the old woman, in alarm.

"Oh, ye're allus goin' off half-cocked, ole woman. Come in, Mr. Shorty—come in," and he flung the door wide open, while she retired to the other end of the entry, and promised the dog a pint of skimmed milk if he would only keep his eye on the mysterious stranger.

The old man led him into the sitting-room, and motioned Shorty to a seat, at the same time carefully putting away his scrap of story paper for future reading.

"Well, how yer was, ole man?"

"Putty smart, thank ye; how be yu be?"

"Good as gold. Yer don't know me?"

"Waal, no; can't say I du 'zactly," said he, putting on his glasses.

"How's yer memory?"

"Waal, not bad. Why?"

"Can yer work her back thirty years?"

"Waal, yes; I guess so. Why?"

"Remember a little runt that was left on yer doorstep 'bout that time ago?" asked Shorty.

"Lemme see—ole woman, du yu hear what he says?" asked Mr. Bilberry, turning to his wife.

"Why, Lord bless us, Jehial, don't yer remember that thar good-for-nothin' little coot? I remember him right smart," said the old woman, sharply.

"Good for yer noddle, ole gal," said Shorty, laughing.

"Now, come tu think on it, I du remember that little cuss. We put him into the poorhouse, whar they tried tu make somethin' out er him, but couldn't, an' then bound him out tu Farmer Snatcher, whar he raised the very devil, an' finally ran away, the Lord knows whar tu. Oh, yes; I remember him, the little rascal. Wish I could see him ag'in."

"Der yer whistle it good an' strong, ole man?"

"Yas; in course I'd like ter see him."

"So would I, the queer little sucker," added Mrs. Bilberry, who was getting interested in the matter.

"Waal, wipe up yer goggles," said Shorty, thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and squaring himself in the chair.

"What?"

"Yu don't go for tu say that yu—"

"I'm the same, sardine."

"No!"

"Jerusalem crickets!"

"Waal, I vow tu gracious. Can it be possible?" said the old woman, rubbing her spectacles and approaching to get a closer look at Shorty.

"Sure's yer born, ole gal. How d'yer like me?"

"Waal—waal—waal. Wonders'll never cease on this ere created 'arth. But yu haven't grown much arter all," said the old man, looking him over.

"Not much. Been too busy ter grow. But what I want ter find out is, der yer know who my dad is?"

"Gracious me! Why, no. I—"

"Hold on, Jehial. Don't yer remember that thar little fat gentleman that called on us 'bout ten year ago?"

"Why, of course! Nice-lookin' little ole chap; an' he was tryin' tu find out somethin' 'bout a foundlin' as was left in the town of Coram 'bout thirty year ago?"

"Yes; an' don't yu mind, Jehial, he said as how he was a little runtish sort of a kid?" added his wife.

"That's so."

"Well, did he leave his card?"

"Lord, no. We didn't know who he war arter."

"No; never thought 'bout yer."

"By the great jimmini jimcrack, I'll bet that was my dad!" said Shorty, thoughtfully.

"More'n likely. But if we'd a known it, we couldn't tell him anything whar tu find yer."

"Go over his make-up, an' do it slow," said Shorty, greatly interested; whereupon the old man gave him as good a description of him as he possibly could.

"Guess dat was de ole man, dead sure. Don't know where he went to, or where he hailed from?"

"Not a thing; nothin', only what I've told yu. But tell us somethin' 'bout yerself," said the old woman.

Shorty told them a tremendous cock and bull story about himself, at which the eyes and mouths of the old couple opened wider and wider, until they looked as though their heads were all going to pieces.

But the old spirit of mischief was on him, and as he finished his yarn, during which that yellow dog had become exceedingly familiar, and was nosing around him, Shorty slyly slipped a spring clothes-pin on his tail, and he commenced ki-yi-ing and running around the room as though possessed of the devil, while the old couple themselves got panic-stricken.

"Lordy massy, Jehial, what ails the dorg?"

"Bless me if I know. Here, Wolferine, be still. What in tarnation is the matter with yu?"

But the dog wouldn't tell him if he knew. His particular business was to get away from a mysterious something that was pinching his tail.

"Plague take the on'ry cuss, what ails him?"

"Guess he's got the hydrophobia," suggested Shorty.

"Oh, Lord—oh, Lord!" cried both of them, and there was lively scrambling to get on top of the table.

"Look out for him, Mr. Shorty; he'll bite yu!"

"Yes—yes, look out!"

"Oh, I'm all hunky punky; I know how ter jerk the hydra right out er dorgs; cured dozens of 'em," said he; and making a dive for the cur who was now going around in a circle, trying to reach his tail with his mouth, he removed the pinching clothes-pin, and of course the brute was all right again.

"Sakes alive, look out!"

"Careful, Mr. Shorty!"

"Oh, he's all right now. Easiest thing in der world ter cure 'em if yer only know how."

"Be yu sure he's all right?" they both asked.

"Plumb sure."

At this they attempted to get down from the table, but in doing so they tipped it over and both tumbled over upon the dog, who ran howling from the room.

It took some time to get matters settled again; after which Shorty chatted with them pleasantly for a few moments longer and then took his leave.

He hadn't learned much beyond the fact that a strange little man had called about a strange little waif some ten years before, but whether he was the one called for, or whether he would ever know any more regarding him or himself than he now knew, was a problem.

But he had enjoyed a little fun, and seen the old couple who first introduced him to the world, and that repaid him pretty well, although his mind was made up to find his dad or perish in the attempt.

Returning to the city he informed Shorty, Jr., for the first time, of what he had done and what he proposed to do, which tickled the Kid almost to convulsions.

"Nonsense, pop, yer rollin' off yer cabase. Der idea of yer ever havin' a dad! Yer losin' yer grip, ole man," said the second edition of Shorty.

"Oh, cheese it, cull. What'er yer givin' me?"

"Take a run 'round der block an' get fresh wind," said the Kid, laughing.

"Put yer taffy on ice! Of course I had a dad, an' he lost me when I's too young to blow him up for his carelessness, an' now I'm going ter hunt him up. Maybe he's rich; who knows?"

"Dat's so. Who knows but he's a minister?"

"Or a deacon?"

"Or an alderman?"

"Or a banker?"

"Or a son of a gun, eh?"

"Oh, lace up yer gash! I'm goin' ter find out what he is."

"Where yer goin' ter begin, pop?"

"Right here in New York, an' if I don't turn his royal nibs up here, I'll travel till I do, sure."

"Bully for you. Lemme go 'long an' help yer?"

"No; yer'd spoil everythin' wid yer deviltry."

"Let's start a show an' travel 'round dat way," suggested the little fellow, with a grin.

"Not much. I'm goin' ter send yer to college, an' go it lone. Yer too fresh, sonny."

"Didn't I allus brace up ter yer?"

"Yes, when yer could play a racket on me."

"Waal, what's der use of havin' a dad, if yer can't play rackets on him? Wouldn't yer play rackets on yer own dad if yer could find him? Course yu would."

Shorty laughed in spite of his earnestness, for he knew very well what he would do if he had a chance.

While this conversation had been going on Shorty had settled in his mind what course he would take. But above all things, he determined to keep his eye out for a short, fat old man who corresponded with the description he had received of the man who went to the poorhouse to make inquiries regarding a foundling, whose description tallied with his own.

And it was only the next day, while he was out taking a walk on Broadway, that his attention was attracted by a dumpy little old fellow who was trudging along, and making himself very agreeable to a very precise little old maid, who was walking with him.

Shorty took a good look at him.

"Hang me if der ole rooster arn't got der family symptoms putty bad, chinnin' sweet ter der gals. Wonder if I looks like him?" he mused, as he toddled behind them.

In truth, he did look like the old fellow somewhat, and people who met them turned around and looked back at what they regarded as a family of shortys, although our little friend was much louder in his dress than the other one was.

As he followed them up, he was trying to think how he could attract the old fellow's attention.

The wind was blowing pretty fresh, and every now and then her dress would sweep against his legs, which little favor on the part of the wind seemed to please him very much, and he would crowd up all the closer to her like a purring old tom cat.

Shorty noticed this, and being close behind them in the crowd, he took the hook end of his cane, and thrusting it quickly between the old fellow's legs, he caught hold of his lady's dress, and drawing it back, the old man caught his foot in it and tumbled down, pulling her on top of him, while Shorty disengaged his cane before he was discovered.

He went down with a grunt, and she with a squeal, knocking the wind nearly out of him, while she lost nearly all hers from fright.

Shorty flew to their assistance.

"Halloo, dad! did you tumble down?" he asked, helping the terrified and disgusted maiden to her feet, and then seizing the old chap for a like service.

"Oh—oh—oh!" the old fellow grunted.

"Did it hurt yer, daddy?" asked Shorty, looking at him with a comical mug.

"What the dickens do you mean, sir?"

"Oh, Mr. Goshier!" exclaimed the ancient maiden, raising her voice and hands in surprise.

"What is it, dear Miss Flutter?"

"Did that horrible creature call you father?"

"No; I only called him dad for short."

"You rascal, what do you mean?"

"Well, arn't you my dad?"

"No, sir. Go away about your business, sir, or I will have you arrested, sir," said he, savagely.

"I'm in search of a dad. Didn't yer ever have a kid somethin' like yerself dat yer lost, left or give away ter a poor-house?"

"You impudent scoundrell! No, sir, never."

"Sure pop? I'll leave it ter der ole hen here, if yer don't look like my kind of a rooster. What d'yer say?"

"Oh—oh, Mr. Goshier!" she almost screamed.

"Don't mind him, Miss Flutter. Let us pass along and get out of the crowd," and he offered her his arm for the purpose of doing so.

"Da—da, papa. Be good to mama!" he called after them, whereat the crowd laughed and enjoyed it.

This was too much for the maiden sensibilities of Miss Flutter, and releasing her arm from his she hailed a passing stage, and getting into it, left the bewildered old beau standing there looking as foolish as a loon.

If he could have got hold of Shorty just then he would undoubtedly have given him a fatherly spanking, whether he was any related to him or not.

Shorty knew this and skipped out.

"Dat's my fust try," he mused. "Some fun but not much parental feelin', I guess," and he walked away laughing.

The next day he and the Kid were out together, as they went nearly every day for a walk. Shorty, Jr., had a sort of a sooner dog with him, a mongrel cur that he had picked up somewhere, and although Shorty whacked him with his cane whenever he could get a chance, yet he persisted in following them just as though he was the handsomest dog in New York.

They continued on, laughing, talking, or playing pranks with people they met until they reached the Grand Central Depot.

"Say, pop, le's go in an' see what's goin' on," said the Kid.

"See what's goin' on! See what's goin' out yer mean ter stutter, don't yer?"

"All right. Have yer whistle. Come on."

They entered the huge depot and walked carelessly through the waiting-rooms, crowded with passengers, and finally an old countryman with a long, lean carpet bag attracted their attention.

He had a thoroughly frightened look on his face that would have attracted the attention of anybody, let alone such a fellow as Shorty.

"I say, yu, I wonder if that ar train has gone ter

Scudderville?" he asked, of a man, but that person turned away with the remark that "he was not a time table, leaving the old fellow staring after him.

"Right this way for Scudderville!" shouted Shorty, pointing out of the street door.

"Yes—yes, I'm here—I'm goin' ter Scudderville," said the old fellow, making a dive out of the door.

About a dozen of the waiting passengers joined with the two Shortys in a laugh. The old fellow ran up and down the sidewalk wildly inquiring where the train was that went to Scudderville.

"Round on der udder side of der depot," said Shorty, Jr., going out and hailing him.

That anxious and bewildered countryman (who was an hour ahead of time at least) started on a run around the huge building, dodging this way and that to avoid people on the walk, and actually kept on until he had made his way entirely around the building and once more rushed panting into the waiting-room where he had started from, and his cry still was:

"Whar's that ar train for Scudderville?"

Shorty was just on the point of getting him on another "string" when his attention was attracted to a dapper fellow who was trying to crowd his way to the door to get on board a train that was on the point of leaving.

Shorty happened to be standing just right, and so did Shorty, Jr.'s dog. He gave the cur a kick which sent him between the dandy's legs, and down he went on top of a basket of choice fruit that he was carrying, smashing it into mush.

With a seven acre curse he arose to his feet and made a kick at the dog. He didn't hit the dog, but he hit a policeman, who wheeled around and gave him about eighteen inches of the extract of club.

Just then the old countryman rushed up.

"How 'bout that ar train for Scudderville?"

"Oh, ram, jam, cram and slam Scudderville!" exclaimed the disgusted dandy, who was famishing for dog meat, for he had not only missed his train, but had spoiled his fruit and got a whack with a policeman's club, all on account of that innocent cur.

"Whar's the train to Scudderville?"

"It don't start for an hour yet," said the police officer, pushing him back.

"Waal, I swan. Yu don't say so," and then he turned to tell his troubles to somebody else. "This ar York is the alfidest town I ever struck yet. Yer can't find out nuthin' from nobody. Goin' tu Scudderville?"

"No, sir, I am not going to Scudderville," said the man he had been boring, at the same time turning away.

"Oh, didn't know but yu war. Putty good many folks live up tu Scudderville," said he.

The man said something that sounded like "ram Scudderville," and the old fellow tackled somebody else.

While this was going on, the Albany express train backed into the depot to take its passengers.

"All aboard for Scudderville!" shouted Shorty.

"Hold on! Lemme out; I want tu git on board them ar Scudderville cars," exclaimed the old fellow, making a rush towards the door which shut out the train, and in doing so he stepped on three or four toes belonging to other passengers, to say nothing of those he incommoded and pushed around.

The result was that they howled at him, cursed him, and finally took his old lank carpet-bag away from him and pounded him over the head with it until the policeman dragged him out of the way and made him sit down in a corner by himself.

In the meantime Shorty had spotted an old fellow who was just rushing through the crowd to get to the train, the last bell having sounded.

"I say, Kid, clap yer ogles on his nibs," said Shorty.

"What! yer der dead image of dat ole rooster. Go for him!" said Shorty, Jr.

"So I will. I'll bet dat's my dad!" saying which he made a break to catch up with him just as he went through the door.

Shorty, Jr. followed, and the dog after him. The train was just moving out, and the old fellow was legging it to catch upon the hind car. Shorty seized him by the coat-tail.

"Hold on, daddy!"

"Hold on, grandpop!" chimed Shorty, Jr., catching hold of Shorty's coat-tail at the same time.

CHAPTER II.

"CONFOUND you, let me alone!" yelled the old man, whose hand was almost clutching the hand-rail of the moving car.

"Hold on; yer my dad!" cried Shorty.

"Yer my gran'dad!" chimed Shorty, Jr., while the dog yelped out something as though he, too, claimed a relationship.

"Look out, I—"

The next instant the old fellow tripped, fell, rolled over, and tumbled down the car-pit, Shorty falling on top of him, Shorty, Jr. falling on top of him, and the dog landing on the top of the Kid, but not badly hurt.

That was no joke, for they all fell quite a distance, although the fat old fellow got the worst of it. But there was little to choose between them, for a more muchly battered crowd seldom, if ever, picked themselves up alone.

The old man rattled off a string of oaths so rapidly that he could not be understood until he came to "confound your little doggoned, onry pate! what the devil did you catch hold of me for?"

"I wanted yer," said Shorty.

"Yes, we wanted yer," added Shorty, Jr., who sat on top of him.

"Confound you, I'll kick you all to pieces: I'll kill you! What the—"

"No, yer wouldn't kick yer own flesh and blood, would yer?" asked Shorty, picking himself up.

"Flesh and thunder! I'll be hanged if I don't—"

"Better git up on yer pins first, dad," and Shorty attempted to assist him.

"You young scoundrels! why, I—I wouldn't have missed that train for fifty dollars."

"An' I wouldn't have missed you for a hundred," said Shorty, helping him up.

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Don't yer recognize me? Don't der voice of natter rattle 'round 'mong yer gizzard 'n things?"

"Confound you, what are you talking about?" asked the old man, straightening up the best way he could, and taking a look at the two young rascals.

"I think yer my dad, I does."

"Your what?" exclaimed the old man, opening his eyes and staggering back.

"I'm in search of my dad—"

"Well, why in thunder don't you go and find him then? What the devil are you fooling around me for?"

"Don't we look 'nough 'like ter be dad an' son?"

"What! Me?"

"Yes."

"Your father?"

"Yes."

"Well, if thought so, I'd commit suicide."

"Better send for der coroner right away, boss," said Shorty, Jr., recovering his crushed hat.

"Who the devil are you?"

"I'm Shorty, Junior."

"Ah, you don't say so. And who are you?" he asked, turning to Shorty.

"I'm der 'riginal Shorty, I am."

"And who the devil may he be?"

"Dat's what I wants ter find out. I knows dat I'm Shorty; everybody knows I'm Shorty, but I'm tryin' ter find my dad."

"Yes, we wants ter find our pop," put in Shorty, Jr.

"Confound you and your pop! I don't know anything about your father. I never was anybody's father in my life."

"Boss—sure of that? Get yer thinker goin'."

"Oh, don't go back on us, ole man!" said the Kid, sadly.

"Bah! Go to the devil!"

"Think I'd find him dere?"

"Most likely. I've a great mind to have you arrested."

"Oh, don't do dat!"

"No, don't bust up two orphans dat way," put in the Kid, who was trying to straighten out his crushed hat.

"Confound you both for a pair of young rascals. Just see what you have done. Look at me, to say nothing of having missed the train. Why, I could kick you the whole length of this depot!"

"Don't do dat," said Shorty, piteously.

"Why not?"

"Cause my dad never kicked me as I knows on, an' I wouldn't know whether it felt natural or not."

"Oh, thunder! Clear out, and leave me alone or I'll call an officer!"

The much abused and badly knocked-up old man took his battered hat from the porter who had picked it up, and gotten it into some sort of shape again. Then he recovered his carpet bag, all the while cursing, and growling like a dog with a sore head.

Then the porter assisted the two Shortys up on the platform, after which they helped him pull the old rooster up also.

"Dere yer was, jus' good's new," said Shorty, after they had got him up.

"Oh, go to blazes! When does the next train go?"

"To blazes?" asked the porter, with a big grin.

"No, to Tarrytown."

"Bout an hour."

"And here I've got to wait that time all on your account," said he, turning to Shorty.

"On, well, it'll take yer all dat time ter get yerself slicked up," he replied, laughing.

"Confound you, yes! and whose fault is it?"

"Yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes; yer no business ter look so much like my dad!"

"Oh, bah!" exclaimed he, turning away, with an impatient gesture.

The two Shortys and the porter laughed loudly. The old man turned and shook his fist at them.

"Say! yer needn't go off mad just 'cause yer arn't my dad. I can't help it."

"I'll get an officer, you scoundrels!" he called.

"Don't do dat, ole man. What yer huntin' for is a long lost son," said Shorty.

"I'll fix you!"

"Ta—ta!"

"Don't bile over!"

Just then a policeman hove in sight.

"Cheese it, cull; there's the cop!" said Shorty, Jr., and they both waltzed out of the depot in a hurry.

"Well, ole man, how d'yer like it's far's yer got?"

"What?"

"Why, der daddy biz."

"Not much. But I'm goin' ter keep at it 'til I bust or find him," said Shorty, resolutely.

"Yer'll go bust fust; bet on it!"

"Ah, money's nothin'. I'm sighin' fer a parent," said Shorty.

"Why not try a bottle of 'Seltzer Apparent,' ole man? Maybe that'll fix you," said the Kid.

"Oh, go choke yerself! Yer got no filial yearnin's. Yer only a 'choker,' dat's all."

"Oh, yer jokin' me, ole man. But, I say, les' go in an' see if ole Scudderville's in here," he added, dart-

ing into the passengers' waiting-room, where they had left the anxious old codger.

Sure enough, there he was, seated where the policeman had left him, still holding his lean carpet-sack between his legs, and glaring around with eyes sticking out like door knobs, all the while looking out to see the train that was to take him to Scudderville.

Shorty saw him first.

Placing his hand to his mouth, he yelled:

"Here you are! Train ready for Scudderville!"

The effect was electric. The old fellow leaped to his feet, and flourishing his carpet-bag around so as to bang three or four people who happened to stand in the way, he made a rush for out of doors again, as he had done once before.

Shorty and the Kid instantly looked serious and wonderfully honest.

"Here! I'm bound for Scudderville. Where's them ar cars?"

Several people laughed, but no one volunteered to enlighten the old fellow as he danced around, fearful lest he might be left behind.

"Whar's them ar cars?" he whooped again.

"Oh, will you go and sit down? The train for Scudderville don't go for half an hour yet," said the policeman, shoving him back towards the seat where he had placed him before.

"Why, consarn your pictur, this about the threeth or fourth time somebody's yelled out 'bout the train for Scudderville. Now, I don't want tu be fuled any more. My wife, Hannah's at the depot (pronouncing it de-pot) with the ole mare an' wagin a waitin' for me, an' I don't want tu be fuled inter lusin' them ar cars," he protested, savagely.

"Sit down and I'll tell you when the train is ready," said the policeman.

"I've been fuled in this 'ere New York 'bout all I want tu be. Come down here yesterday with this 'ere bag chuck full of tip top fresh eggs tu sell, an' get Hannah a new caliker dress, and hang me if a chap down here didn't make me believe as how it war ag'in the law tu carry eggs unmuzzled in New York, an' he made me pay him a dollar bill tu take 'em off my hands an' keep me from bein' rested. Yes, he did!"

A loud laugh from the passengers who stood around greeted this confession.

"All right, I don't blame you all for larfin', for it war the alfidest greenist thing I ever hearn tell on. But I've got fifty cents' worth of ice cream here in my bag tu make myself hunk with Hannah."

Another laugh, and the passengers began to think that they had stumbled upon an accidental circus, with the side shows all thrown in.

"Goldarn New York, anyway. If they see a feller that looks the least bit green, they just go for him bald-headed. Lemme get back tu Scudderville once more, an' yu don't catch me here ag'in in one spell."

Shorty stole up and took a seat beside him, after he had again sat down. The old fellow looked at him anxiously, as much as if to ask if he, too, was going to Scudderville.

"I say, pop, yer wants ter keep yer eye peeled here," said he, in a stage whisper.

"Eh! What is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"They are tryin' ter fool yer."

"No, be they, though?"

"Sure. They want ter get at that ice cream."

The old fellow seized his carpet bag with a grasp that was death-like, at the same time glancing wildly around the room.

"This is the train for Scudderville, but dey'll try ter make yer b'lieve it arn't, for dey wants to get yer ice cream," said Shorty.

"I'll be goldarned if they du, though."

"That's right. Now climb right in an' work yer way ter der cars. Don't mind what people say. It's der last train ter day," he whispered.

"Great Jehosaphat!" and seizing his old bag, he made a dive for the passenger gate where people were crowding through for an express train. "Lemme through! You can't fule me any longer. I'm goin' tu see Scudderville to-night or perish!"

He began to elbow his way through the crowd, making enemies at every step, when finally they turned upon him savagely, and the policeman again snatched him almost bald-headed, and took him struggling back to the seat he had given him.

"Rot blast yure everlastin' pictur! I ain't goin' ter be fuled any longer. I want ter git on board of them ar cars an' go to Scudderville," said he.

"Now, you stay here until I call you or I will take you in and lock you up," said the policeman.

"Don't yer try ter play rutes on me!" and he struggled to get away.

The policeman spat on his hands, and was on the point of jerking him into the lock-up, when a passenger who had observed the whole business approached and informed him that the little runt out by the door had made all the mischief, and that the poor countryman was not to blame.

The policeman turned to get a look at Shorty, but Shorty got a look at him first, and lit out, concluding that he had squeezed all the fun out of the old fellow that he could.

Both of the Shortys walked away laughing, and jumping on board of a Fourth avenue car, they headed for home.

They rode on for some time without finding anything more entertaining than laughing over the fun they had just been enjoying, but presently the conductor called on them to collect their fares.

"Two halves," said Shorty, handing him a dime.

"Two what?" growled the conductor.

"Two kids."

"Where?"

"Here. Look at us."

"Weigh us," said Shorty, Jr.

"I'll raise you if you give me that sort of taffy."
 "Perhaps yer don't like our weigh."
 "You'll have to pay your way here, young chap," said the conductor, savagely.
 "Yes, but we are lambs. See?"
 "Lambs! But you'll get your mutton cooked if you don't come down with two cents more."
 Shorty concluded that he had been fired around all he cared to be that day, and so he paid the money, after which the Kid blackguarded him for attempting to pass for a child, and trying to beat the conductor out of two cents.
 "I'm going ter drop yer, Mr. Kid, yer can't go wid me any more," said Shorty, sourly.
 "All right, I don't want ter go wid a chap as goes ter beat car conductors," replied the Kid.
 "Yer too fresh."
 "But I'm square, though."
 "Square!"
 "Yes, if I am a rounder."
 The old man gazed out of the window, and the smaller torment grinned all over himself.
 That night Shorty gave the little rascal the slip and went out alone.
 The truth was, he had heard about a certain fortune-teller whom he wished to consult about finding his dad, and he didn't want the Kid along.
 She pretended to be able to tell a person all about the past, present, and future, and Shorty made up his mind that he wanted a piece of it.
 So he made his way to her abode, and found her to be a tall, angular woman about forty years of age, with all sorts of mysterious ways about her, and any quantity of humbug.
 "Be yer der ole gal as does it?" he asked, when he was shown into her presence.
 "Do what, sir?" she demanded, savagely.
 "Tells about it."
 "I am a fortune-teller, sir."
 "Well, all right. Set her a workin'."
 "Do you wish to have your fortune told?" asked she.
 "Course I does. Don't s'pose I come here co'rtin' der yer?" said Shorty, with a grin.
 "And I trust you did not come here to insult me?"
 "What! Never insulted anybody in my life. So go ahead an' tell us all 'bout it."
 "Well, sir, the first thing to do is the payment of the customary fee," said she, calmly.
 "Oh, I forgot 'bout der admission. How much does it take ter see der show?"
 "My fee is two dollars if you wish to have the past, present, and future revealed."
 "All right. Here's yer coin. Now histe der rag an' start der show."
 "There is no occasion for levity, sir, for this is a very serious thing," said the old woman.
 "Can't I have some fun in mine if I pay for it?"
 "No, sir. I deal in serious facts."
 "All right. Set 'em agoin'."
 Shorty threw himself into a big easy chair, and again told her to fire away, which she proceeded to do as follows:
 "You have had a good deal of trouble and sorrow in your life, and you are destined to have a great deal more before you get through. You have had trouble with your parents and are tempted to run away from home on account of it."
 Shorty opened his eyes at this piece of news.
 "You are in love, but will not be successful with the lady. She loves another."
 "Der deuce yer say," muttered he.
 "But there's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught, remember," she went on.
 "Say! What'er yer givin' me, anyhow? Is dis er a fish market?" demanded Shorty.
 "What do you mean? I was simply making use of an illustration."
 "Oh, well, we don't want dis ere sketch illustrated. Tain't worth it. Go on wid yer taffy. I want my two dollars' worth."
 "Please don't make any remarks."
 "All right. Spread yer mucilage."
 "You will cross water and inherit money."
 "Ah, now yer are beginnin' ter shout."
 "You will eventually have great good fortune."
 "That's it, old gal. Give me my money's worth. Best show I ever patronized."
 "You haven't had much experience in the world yet."
 "No, dat's so, I'm green as grass."
 "But you are quick to learn."
 "Yer bet. I can see through a humbug as quick as a flash of catnip."
 The old woman squirmed a little at this.
 "Do you wish to ask any particular question?"
 "Do I? Just twig my buzz."
 "Your what?" she asked, in surprise.
 "Listen ter der music of my chin."
 "I don't understand you, sir."
 "Well, hear me. Can yer see my dad?"
 "See your what?"
 "My dad. Yer see, I never seen him, but I wants ter. How is it?"
 "What?"
 "Can yer work her?"
 "Her!"
 "Bah! Can yer tell me anything 'bout his old royal nibs? Yer say dat yer knows all 'bout der past, present, an' future. Give us some of it," and Shorty fidgeted in his chair.
 The old woman took another good look at her, and seemed puzzled.
 "You never saw him?"
 "Not ter know der ole rooster."
 "And your mother?"
 "Don't know. Guess I must er had one, hey?"
 The fortune-teller smiled, as Shorty cocked his eye and winked at her.

"Most likely. Were you a foundling?"
 "Now yer cackle."
 "What?"
 "Dat's me."
 "You were a foundling?"
 "Yes. Now go it."
 The old woman closed her eyes for a moment, and then recovering herself, she took a pack of cards and began to shuffle them.
 "What's yer little game?" asked Shorty, getting up and pushing his chair toward her as she sat by a table.
 "I don't half understand you. You are a mystery to me," said she, stopping short.
 "Well, dat's what's der matter wid me. But seein' as how yer can't tell fortunes, I'll play yer a little game of 'whiskey poker' ter see whether yer have dat two dollars what I give yer or I have four," said he, squaring himself at the table.
 "I do not intend to play cards; I never gamble."
 "Oh, yer don't, eh? What's yer racket?"
 "By these cards I can read your destiny."
 "All right. Spit her out," and Shorty lay back in the chair, and reaching over the arm of it, he pinched the tail of the old woman's favorite tabby cat, and made her howl terribly.
 "Oh, darling, what's the matter with you?" she asked, looking around.
 "Did yer speak ter me? I'm waitin', pet," said he, assuming that she had spoken to him.
 "Sir, you are a very rude young man. I was speaking to my cat."
 "What's der matter wid yer ole pussy, anyway?"
 "Let us confine ourselves to business, if you please."
 "Dat's me. Let her go!"
 She shuffled the cards some more, and Shorty cut them three times. Then she began:
 "Your father still lives," said she.
 "Good for der ole man."
 "You may have to search long, but you will eventually find him."
 "Bully for me!"
 "And your mother—"
 "Shall I find der ole gal, too?"
 "You will."
 "Bully for you! Why, yer der boss fortune-teller. I'll send der boys ter see yer," said he, and at the same time he managed to pinch the tail of that pussy cat again, at which she howled and skipped under the sofa.
 "Thank you," said she, but whether for his promise or for pinching the pussy he did not know.
 "But, I say; how be I goin' ter find der ole hen an' rooster?"
 She took another look at him, and once more closed her eyes.
 "I can see it," she exclaimed, suddenly.
 Shorty leaped to his feet, and held his hat in front of him.
 "I can see it."
 "No!"
 "Yes; I can see the germ of a wart on your nose. You have inherited it from your father."
 "What! Did der ole rooster have a key on his bugle?" Shorty asked, while laughing.
 "He had a wart on his nose."
 "Wart a shame!"
 But the pun was lost.
 "In searching for your father you want to be on the lookout for a short, thick-set man, with a wart on his nose."
 "Oh, dat's my mutton!"
 "He is rich."
 "Dat's my kind. How old is he?"
 "About fifty."
 "Good 'nough. Give us a 'lucky number'."
 "Number 2."
 "Dat's hunk. Dat's me and der Kid. By-by, ole gal. Be good ter yourself, aunty. Ta-ta, I'm off in search of a man wid a wart on his flute," and banging his hat upon his head, he waddled out of the house.

CHAPTER III.

"Dat's my mutton now," mused Shorty.
 "Want it well done or rare?" asked the Kid, Shorty, Jr., with a big grin.
 "Well done, but no sauce from you."
 "But whistle it louder—what's yer mutton?"
 "A short, fat man about fifty years old, with a wart on his nose."
 "Wart a joke!"
 "You'll get choked der fust thing yer know."
 "I'm choking now for a glass er beer. Won't yer come in an' shout?" said the little comical rascal, pointing to a lager beer saloon.
 "Yer wants ter be 'balled off' hey?"
 "Well, I don't care how yer do it, whether yer shout or bawl, so long as I gets my suction onter a glass er beer. Come on, an' then I'll help yer find a man wid a corn on his bugle."
 "Corn be hanged! I'm lookin' fer a rooster wid a wart on his cut-water," replied Shorty, and laughing, they waddled into a lager beer saloon.
 It was about noon, and they were out for their customary walk. There didn't happen to be anybody in the place at the time but a big fat Dutch woman who was 'tending the bar.
 Shorty himself barely came up to the top of the bar, and the Kid hardly half-way up. But the little rascal climbed up on the top of a beer keg that stood in front of it, and looked almost as tall as a man.
 "Give us two beers, ole gal," said he, striking the bar with his little fist. "One for me an' one for dis little runt here," he added, pointing to Shorty.
 "Yaw," said she, and taking two glasses she turned away to draw the foamy.

Shorty, Jr. hopped down from the keg, and was, of course, out of sight. The woman drew the beer and placed it upon the bar, when, seeing nobody but Shorty, she began to look around.
 "Where vos dot man gone to?"
 "Man? I saw no man. What's der matter wid yer?" said Shorty.
 "Dot man vot galled for dot beer."
 "I saw no man only one," and he put his mug of beer out of sight.
 The old gal looked amazed, and when Shorty put down five cents to pay for his drink she looked even more so.
 "Vel, dot vos some queer dings," she said.
 "Queer; I guess yer been drinkin' too much an' kinder see double."
 "All right; I drinks id myself," and she at once proceeded to do so.
 As she did so, Shorty Jr. popped upon the top of the keg again.
 "Say, where's my beer?"
 "Mine cot, vare you vas all der vile?" she asked, in astonishment.
 "Been here waitin' fer my beer."
 "All right, I dink me dot you vos gone. I draw you some more."
 Shorty went and sat down by the table to see the fun that possibly might come of it.
 "Well, hurry up," said the Kid.
 "By jinks, bud dot vas queer," said she, musingly, and she proceeded to draw the beer.
 The Kid jumped down and again stood out of sight when she turned around.
 "Here! Vare vos dot man already?"
 "What's der matter wid yer? Der arn't no man here but me," said Shorty.
 "Got in Himmel!" she exclaimed, looking wildly around.
 "Oh, yer've got 'em, ole gal—got 'em bad."
 She looked serious.
 "Drink lighter, I'm a-tellin' yer."
 "Yaw, by jimminy, I drink me dot, too," and she raised the mug to her lips.
 "Halloo! where's my beer?" called the little joker, from his concealment.
 She dropped the beer in alarm.
 "Vot vos dot?" she whispered.
 "Where's my beer?" he called again.
 "Donder—" and she came cautiously out from behind the bar to take a look.
 "Where's dat beer? What kind er way's dis ter treat a customer?" the little fellow demanded, thrusting his hands into his pockets and swaggering around with a look of indignation.
 "Mine good gracious!" she exclaimed, starting back and holding up her hands.
 "But where's my beer?"
 "Vot beer?"
 "Lager beer, to be sure."
 "You told me noddings 'bout some beer?"
 "Yes, I did. I called for two beers, one for me an' one for him," said he, pointing to Shorty.
 "Dat's so," put in Shorty.
 "How vos dot?"
 "I called for a beer an' yer drank it, dat's how vos dot. Come, hurry up."
 "But dot man dot skip oud?"
 "Oh, yer off yer base, ole gal. Been no man here."
 "By jinks, I guess dot I go crazy somedimes," said she, going for a glass of beer.
 As she turned away, Shorty, Jr. skipped out of the door, leaving his father still seated at the table.
 "Yaw, dot vos der queerest somedings dot I have seen already," said she, turning to take the beer out to the table; "I dinks dot—"
 Here she paused again and looked around in even greater astonishment than before.
 "Well?" said Shorty, looking calmly at her.
 "Mine Got in Himmel!"
 "What is it now?"
 "Vare vos dot boy gone?"
 "What boy?"
 "Dot poy dot call for de beer."
 "Dere's no boy here. What's der matter wid yer?"
 "Dere vos no poy here chust now?"
 "No."
 "Mine good gracious!" and she fairly staggered.
 "Little while ago yer was talkin' 'bout a man, now yer cacklin' 'bout a boy; I'm tellin' yer dat yer off yer nut," said Shorty.
 "Oh, mine gracious, dot vos so strange."
 "Don't drink so much beer, ole gal."
 "I drink me nod so much as ten twelve glasses all day. Dot vos blayed oud; I dinks me dot dere vos somedings queer 'bout dot."
 "Yer've got 'em. Da-da. Don't drink so much beer, an' yer'll be all right again," saying which he walked out of the place, leaving the woman in a state of utter bewilderment.
 Nothing further worth recording happened that day, but in knocking around in search of fun and adventure, and at the same time searching for Shorty's dad, both of them turned up in Jersey city a day or two afterwards.
 At the ferry house Shorty got his eye on a little fat old man, who so nearly filled the bill, that he started after him in order to make sure whether he had a wart on his nose or not.
 He did not succeed in catching up with him until he had got outside the gate, and upon a horse-car that was just starting away.
 Shorty and the Kid also scrambled on board, and the moment he got face to face with the man, he saw that he actually did have a wart on his nose, and a large one it was, too.
 That filled the bill.
 Shorty went for him red-hot.
 "I say, boss. I think yer my dad," said he.
 "Your what?" demanded the man.
 "My dad; I never seen nim, but dey tell me dat

he's yer style of a rooster, and wears a corn on his bugle."

This made the passengers laugh.

"That's him, sure pop," put in the Kid.

"If you don't clear out I'll give you a fatherly spanking, you impudent runt," said the man.

"Dat's it. Dat's der way for a daddy ter talk ter his son. If yer'll only own up dat yer my dad, I'll let yer spank two hours."

"Get out of the way."

"Don't get yer back up. I'm plumb in earnest."

"And so am I, and if you don't clear out I will throw you out of this car."

"Go it, ole man, I'll brace up ter yer," said Shorty, Jr., as big as anybody.

"Say, didn't yer once have a kid dat yer lost?" persisted Shorty.

"No."

"Stolen?"

"No."

"Strayed?"

"No, sir. What the devil are you driving at?"

"I'm in search of my dad."

"The devil you are!"

"Yes, an' I's a yearnin' for my grand-pop," put in the Kid.

"Yes, an' yer just fill the bill, ole man."

"What makes you think so?"

"Everything 'bout yer, an' especially der wart on yer bugle."

"I'll wart you, you rascal!" exclaimed the man, making a dive for Shorty.

By this time the eight or ten passengers in the car had become greatly interested in the affair, and were taking it all in.

"Don't hit me if yer aren't my dad!" cried Shorty, dodging out of the way.

In going for him, the old man tripped over his carpet bag, and tumbled into the lap of a red-headed Irish woman who sat opposite, and who went for him with fist and nail, pushing him over upon somebody on the other side, and following him up as though bent on tearing him all to pieces.

In less than ten jerks of a cat's tail there was the most confounded uproar ever heard, and nearly everybody in the car was engaged in the fight, and the greater portion of them piled together in the center of it.

Shorty Jr. got under one of the seats out of harm's way, but poor Shorty was the undermost dog in the fight, and was getting badly used.

The conductor rang the bell to stop the car, and then rushed in to put a stop to the riot, but it was fully five minutes before he could do so, during which time several bloody noses were given and received, and several hats smashed and garments torn.

The old fellow with a wart on his nose got his share of the banging, and when the thing was over he looked quite as bad as Shorty did, although he was ten times as mad.

And by this time a policeman had arrived.

"Arrest that fellow!" cried he of the warty nose, pointing to Shorty.

"What fur? I didn't do nuffin'," said Shorty.

"Yes, you did, you little scoundrel. Arrest him, officer, and I'll prefer a charge against him."

"I tell yer dat I didn't touch yer."

"Oh, come along," said the officer, seizing him by the coat collar.

"An' yees better take that bloody ould duffer in as well, Mr. Policeman," said the Irish woman, "for he do be as bad a blackguard as is in the country."

"Oh, you shut up," snapped the old man, who was trying to get the wrinkles out of his hat.

"Troth, I'll shut yees up if ye give me any more of yer gab, so I will," said she, shaking her fist at him.

"Come—come, hurry up and don't keep us waiting here all day," said the conductor.

"Come along," and the officer snaked Shorty out of the car, followed by Shorty, Jr., although he was not actually under arrest.

Old Warty got himself together the best he could, and started to leave the car.

"Oat wid ye, ye ould vagabond!" was the Irish woman's parting salute, but to which he made no reply.

The car started again, and the party that had been pulled out of it set out for the station-house.

The old man was mad as a hornet, and all the way he kept up a jawing. Shorty continued to protest his entire innocence, but as the officer had nothing to do with that, he took them in, after which he conducted them before a police magistrate, followed by quite a crowd, many of whom recognized Shorty, and were anxious to learn all about the trouble.

The judge was a queer old fellow, although a square one, and learning that a charge had been preferred, he proceeded at once to investigate it.

"Well, now, what's this?" was his first question.

Both Shorty and the complainant began to talk at once, and very fast.

"Hold on!" said the judge, banging the desk with his gavel. "What is your name?" he asked, turning to the man.

"John Watson," he replied.

"John Watson his nose," said Shorty, Jr.

"Silence in the court!" said the court officer, a Frenchman from Cork.

"What is your name?" he asked of Shorty.

"My name's Shorty, boss."

"Shorty! I want no nicknames here. Young man, what is your name?"

"Dat's all der name I ever had, boss. I'm known der world over as Shorty."

"Well, now, what is the trouble?"

Again both of them began to talk.

"Silence, I say!"

"Silence in the court!" yelled the officer.

"This impudent young—"

"Dis bloody old—"

"Silence!"

"Silence in the court!"

"One at a time. Watson, what is it?"

"Well, your honor, I was riding in a car when this young scoundrel—"

"Dis yer's how it is, jedge, I—"

"Silence, I say!"

"Silence in the court!" echoed the officer.

"Go on, Watson," said the judge.

"This fellow he insulted me and—"

"Dat arn't so, jedge," said Shorty, leaping upon the table in front of the court, on which Shorty, Jr. was already sitting.

"Silence in the court!"

"I'll tell yer all 'bout it, jedge," but the judge was pounding for order, and the spectators were convulsed with laughter.

"Silence, I say!"

"Silence in the court!"

"Yer see, jedge, I's tryin' fer ter find my dad. I don't know weder I's an orphan, half-orphan, or what der blazes I am, any more'n I know what my name is."

They couldn't choke him off.

"That's nothing to do with it. He grossly insulted me."

"No, I didn't."

"Silence in the court!" yelled the court officer, for about the twentieth time, this being what he regarded as his entire duty.

"Go it!" shouted the Kid.

"Get down from the table," said the judge.

"I wants ter tel yer how it was, jedge. Yer see I wanted ter find my dad. A fortune teller told me dat I'd find him, an' dat he was a little fat ole rooster like his nibs here, an' dat he wore a wart on his bugle; I met him an' only axed him if he ever lost a kid, dat's all, an' he got mad an' kicked up a fight wid der passengers."

"How is that, Mr. Watson?"

"Warts-on-der-nose," said Shorty, Jr., again.

"Silence in the court!"

"What have you got to do with the case?" asked the judge, looking at the Kid.

"Why, jedge, I'm Shorty, Jr. He's my dad."

"I don't believe a word of it, your honor. They are a pair of young rascals," said Watson.

"Jedge, I'm givin' it ter yer straight. Dere isn't a boy in der country dat don't know Shorty, and if yer don't believe it, I'll send for 'Peter Pad', he's twenty-four karret fine, an' he knows all 'bout me. I tell yer, jedge, I'm square."

At this a number of young fellows in the court-room applauded.

"Silence in the court!"

"Did he strike you, Watson?"

"Well, I—that is, he provoked me."

"He got his shirt off for nothin', jedge, an' in der muss we all got mixed up. But I wasn't a-hittin' him or nobody; I was a-whoopin' ter get out."

"Did Watson strike you?"

"Jedge, I'll never tell yer, for I don't know. But look at me! I's got all I want from somebody."

"The case is dismissed," said the judge, whereat there was a loud cheer from the spectators, and the court officer had all he could do, and more, too, in clearing the room.

"Bully for your honorable nibs!" said Shorty.

"But don't molest this gentleman again. It is quite evident that he is not your father."

"Me his father! I guess not, the cur!" and Mr. Watson rushed from the room, only to be received with a shout of derision when he got outside.

"Well, jedge, I don't want no duffer like dat what's got no parental feelinks."

"Come along, old man; yer'll never find yer dad," said Shorty, Jr., laughing.

"Well, I don't want ter find many more of dat kind. I'm all broke up. Le's go home."

"I should say so. I'm glad I never had so much trouble in finding my dad."

Shorty grinned, but made no reply.

As they got outside of the court-room, the crowd that had assembled there gave them three rousing cheers and a tiger, for they all remembered them.

Hiring a cab, they got into it and started for New York, where it took nearly a week for Shorty to get himself together again and resume the nobby look he had before meeting the man with a wart on his nose.

But he soon forgot his experience, however, and was once more as full of the devil as ever, although the idea of finding his father somewhere and somehow never forsook him for any length of time.

One day Shorty ran upon Sergeant Polly.

He was walking along Broadway when he met him.

Those who read the original "Shorty"—that is, the story of his first experiences in New York—will remember Sergeant Polly, of the police, the man who first brought Shorty out upon the stage, and set him agoing.

"Well—well, Shorty, is this you?" he asked, grasping him by the hand.

"What! Sarge? Sergeant Polly, or do I mistake myself?" exclaimed Shorty.

"Right."

"Tight."

"Square."

"All around."

"How are you, Shorty?"

"Good's gold. How yer was yerself, ole man?"

"Never better. By gracious, but this is good," added the sergeant, still shaking him by the hand.

"Good! it's a dead sure cure for sore eyes ter see yer, sarge. Big gates all der vile?"

"Oh, pretty good. Been to California. But I have heard from you all the while through *The Boys of*

New York, and saw that you were doing 'em brown right straight along."

"You bet."

"As usual."

"Every time."

"Well—well! But we are growing old, Shorty," said Polly, who had really grown older to appearances than had Shorty.

"Old! Why, sarge, I'se got a kid dat's a bigger devil dan I was when yer fust knowed me."

"Oh, I've heard about that kid! Is he regular?"

"Solid. Got married when I was full."

"Well, I should say so. What are you doing now? Haven't heard of you for a long time."

"Come inter this beery, and I'll tell yer while we quaff some of der foamy," and led the way into a lager beer saloon.

They took seats at one of the tables, and Shorty ordered the beers.

"You are the same Shorty, I see."

"Yes; only got older an' settled down."

"Oh, yes, you look settled. Where is the kid?"

"I left him home. He's so full of the devil dat I can't get along wid him noway."

"He's a chip of the old block, then, hey?"

"Sarge, he's mor'n dat; he's all block," said Shorty, laughing.

"Well, tell me something about yourself."

"I's got a mission."

"Mission! Deviltry?"

"No, I's quiet now."

"What are you giving me, Shorty?"

"Never play any more rackets. Honest."

"Then you must have changed. But what is your mission, as you call it?"

"I'm tryin' ter find my dad."

"Your what?"

"My progenitor; my parent."

"The devil!"

"Or some such a person."

"What put that in your head?"

"Well, I read a story in der *Boys of New York* dat told all about a cove like me dat found his ole man, an' I didn't know but I might do der same thing."

"Good enough. I dare say you had parents."

"Well, ter a certain extent, somewhat."

"How long have you been on this lay?"

"Oh, on'y a short time."

"I hear you are well fixed."

"Got boodles of it."

"Bully for you. Well, what have you found out?"

"Nothing. I'm looking, now, for a little ole man wid a wart on his bugle."

"For what?"

"My dad."

"My — But, I say, I know a little old fellow about fifty years old, who has a wart on his nose."

"No."

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Bundle."

"What 'bout him?"

"He's a mystery."

"Rich?"

"Dead loads of it."

"Look like me?"

"Very much."

"Introduce me, sarge?"

"Of course I will."

"Once more for my dad! Set 'em up again, landlord!"

CHAPTER IV.

ONCE more was Shorty bent on finding that little old man with a wart on his nose.

His old friend, Sergeant Polly, had listened to his story and assured him that he knew of just such a man.

"Lemme grab dat mutton, sarge, for it may be parental mutton," said he, eagerly.

"That is to say, it may be the old man," replied the sergeant, laughing.

"Dat's der whistle."

"All right, I hope it may be. I'll give you a letter of introduction to him."

"Good 'nough. Yer know him?"

"Oh, very well."

"What sort of a rooster is he?"

"Nice old fellow with a pile of money."

"Dat's der ham-bone fer me ter pick."

"But he has always passed himself off for a *bachelor*," said Polly, after a moment's reflection.

"Oh, he has, hey? Well, maybe he is. Yer can't most allers putty generally tell 'bout der way der old cat'll jump in dis world," and Shorty looked just a trifle serious.

"You are right, Shorty."

"Where does he live?"

"Up in Albany."

"All right. Gimme der letter an' I'll go up an' see him."

So it was arranged, and Mr. Polly gave him the letter of introduction to Mr. Bundle, for such was his poetic name.

The next day Shorty took the boat for Albany, leaving the kid, Shorty Jr., at home.

He felt just a trifle sentimental, and had no desire to take that young chip of the old block along, and not the slightest idea of having any fun with anybody.

It was a delightful summer evening, and as there were yet two or three hours before dark, he lit a cigar and took a seat on the after-deck of the *St. John*, to muse awhile with his feet cocked up on the guard-rail, and to gaze at the receding city 'twixt the toes of his boots.

He made a comical picture as he sat there tipped back in his chair; his hat tipped forward until it almost rested on the bridge of his nose, and without

paying the slightest attention to anybody around him.

Several of the passengers laughed and passed comments on him, but notwithstanding he heard one or two of them, he pretended not to do so, and puffed away at his segar.

It was nearly dark before he changed his position, further than to light a fresh segar, and by that time the boat was opposite Yonkers.

To tell the truth, (although it may be hard to believe), Shorty had a touch of the blues. And he often had such touches since he became sentimental regarding the finding of his father, and he might have gone to his state-room without noticing anybody, had not a very spoony couple of young lovers taken a seat near him.

They were chuck full of poetry and yum-yum, and went on with their nonsense until it sickened one or two other passengers near them, and finally attracted the attention of Shorty.

"Oh, Angie, how beautiful is this night," said he, sliding his arm around her waist.

"Yeth, George," she replied, lispingly.

"Almost as bright and beautiful as something else I know, Angie," and he squeezed her again.

"Oh, George!"

"How calm and silvery the noble river is, and how like a thing of life we glide over its bosom—"

"Oh, George, how can you!" she exclaimed, covering her face with her fan.

"Oh, aren't yer 'shamed of yerself, George, ter glide over der bosom dat way?" said Shorty, speaking loud enough for everybody to hear.

And everybody did hear, and everybody laughed. Some of them yelled, in fact, and the way that pair of spoonies danced out of that was lively.

"Good—good!" said several, who had been bored by them, yet hadn't the courage to speak.

But Shorty laughed to himself, and paid no attention to the remarks. After walking around a few moments to stretch his legs, he lighted another "pipe," and started forward to where his state-room was located.

He wasn't long in ascertaining that it was close to the wheelhouse, where nobody but a deaf man could sleep. He went to the office to see if it couldn't be changed, but no; the steamer was crowded and every state-room taken.

Then he was mad, and while debating whether to sit up all night or lie awake in his noisy state-room, he came across a nervous man and wife who were just coming out of a room near the stern. They were evidently unaccustomed to traveling, if, indeed, they had ever been on a steamboat before, and Shorty spotted them at once.

They went out on the after-deck, sticking very close to each other, and Shorty took a seat near to where they sat.

"Arn't you nervous, Charley?" he heard her ask of him in a few minutes.

"No, not much," he replied.

"Arn't there any danger of the boilers bursting?"

"Guess not."

"But you know they did explode once."

"Yes, I know; but—"

"Let's sit up all night, Charley?"

"Oh, I guess there's no danger."

"Say, what's yer number?" asked Shorty.

"210," said she.

"Most dangerous place on the boat."

"What?" they both exclaimed.

"Fact."

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, I don't like to say anything about it, for it might hurt der reputation of der boat."

"Oh, tell us, is there any danger?" she pleaded.

"Hush!" and he looked cautiously around.

"Yes—yes," they both said in whispers.

"Yer know she bust her biler once."

"Yes, I heard that she did."

"But didn't they get in a new one?"

"Hush! Mum!"

"Yes—yes."

"Dat was taff."

"What?"

"Ohin."

"I don't understand you."

"Dey give der public taffy."

"How?"

"No new biler put in."

"Is that so?"

"Patched up der ole one," said Shorty, in a stage whisper.

"Is that so?" they both exclaimed.

"Sure, an' it's right under yer state-room."

"Oh, Charley, we won't go into it; we'll stay out here on the deck all night," said she.

"Can't yer get it changed?"

"No; I heard a man say just now that there wasn't another state-room to be had."

"Hush! Taffy!" this in another whisper.

"How?"

"Mum! Don't give me away for tellin' yer 'bout it!"

"Oh, certainly not; much obliged to you, indeed."

"I'll work a racket for yer."

"How?"

"I know der clerk. Gimme yer key an' I'll get another room for yer, I'll bet."

"Oh, you are so kind," said the man, handing him the key of his state-room.

Shorty took it and disappeared. After being gone a few moments he returned and handed them the key to his own noisy room.

"Dere yer be. Dat's all hunky," said he.

"You are very kind," the wife said.

"Dat's all right."

"Whereabouts is this room, I wonder?"

"Right in the middle of her. Der coon will show yer where 'tis."

"And it is out of danger?"

"All hunk. No danger widin a hundred feet of it. Come'n get yer things out of yer old room, for I mus' carry der key back."

They were not long in doing this, after which they went in search of a porter to show them their new room, while Shorty pretended to take the key of the old one back to the office.

But of course he did nothing of the kind, and the moment they were out of sight he slipped into the room and soon afterwards slipped into bed.

"How's dis for high?" he chuckled. "Dey say yer can't play tricks on travelers, but I reckon dat yer can, if dey arn't fly," and without ever thinking for a moment of how the nervous couple would get along with the noise and the rattle of the paddle-wheel, he went quietly to sleep and kept at it until the boat bumped at her dock in Albany the next morning.

Fortunately he was where he could see the passengers as they went ashore, and almost the first ones that he clapped his eyes on, as he looked from his state-room window, were the couple with whom he had exchanged rooms the night before, showing that they had slept but little, if any, and were consequently on hand to be the first ashore.

As they walked up upon the dock they both turned and looked back at the boat with a frown, but whether because of her dangerous boilers or noisy paddle-wheels, Shorty could not tell.

But he indulged in about two yards of grin while dressing, and in the course of half an hour he was seated in a carriage and being driven to Stanwix Hall Hotel.

Breakfast and another segar made him all right and ready for the business before him.

But as it was early yet he concluded to take a walk about the city, and revisit some of the places he had become acquainted with in his old showman days, while out with his minstrels.

He remembered Albany especially, for here it was that he had enjoyed a barrel of fun and played many of his younger day rackets, although for that matter he was just as fond of them now as he had ever been. It was born in him.

"Eh, by thunder! der's nothin' like a life on der road wid a show," he mused, as place after place, with its laughable associations came to view, and he chuckled over the memories they awakened of persons and events. "Unscrow my belly-button if I haven't a bloody good mind ter go at it some more; I'm rustin' all ter pieces doin' nix."

It was nearly ten o'clock before he finished his rounds, and set out in quest of the little old man with a wart on his nose, Mr. Epturaim Bundle.

But as luck would have it, that gentleman was out of town, and would not be back until the next day, and not wishing to return to New York without seeing him, he concluded to go up to Troy and kill the day in that city of stoves and laundries.

There he met several showmen whom he knew, and the result was that he had a good time, and the day passed without his scarcely knowing it, and at night he returned to Albany after witnessing the show.

It was midnight when he got back to the hotel, and the day clerk was just turning business over to Dennis O'Callagin, the night porter.

Now Shorty knew Dennis very well, having made his acquaintance years before while stopping at the hotel, and right glad was the porter to see him.

They talked over old times for an hour or so, and finally Dennis took a lantern and went over the whole building, as was his custom, to see that everything was all right, leaving Shorty in the office.

The little wag was waiting for just this opportunity, for he had heard the clerk call the porter's attention to the call-slate, on which he had written down the names of several persons who wished to be called at different hours, and it occurred to him that he could have some fun with this bit of the porter's business.

So he took the slate while Dennis was gone, and made such alterations as he thought best to carry out his ideas, and got through with it just as Dennis returned to the office.

"Begorra, Mither Shortness, but it's ould we be both of us gittin' ther while," said he, as he put away his lantern and resumed his chair.

"Yer right, Dennis; old Fader Time don't take any more stock in us den he does in oder folks," said Shorty, with a sigh.

"Are yez in ther minstrel business yet?"

"No. Made my pile, Dennis, an' am layin' off on my oars."

"Be ye, indade? Well, barrin' meself, I don't know of any other man I'd sooner see well fixed. Troth but ye wargood at ther monkey business. Did ye iver think of gettin' married?"

"Nix."

"Sure yer better off widout it, for ye moight get a woife as big as two of yees, and maybe she'd wallop ther divil out of yees."

"Mor'n likely."

"Faith, that do be the way wid me, and I'm as big as three of yees."

"Der ole gal gives it ter yer, does she?"

"Sometoimes she do be knocking the divil out of me, begorra, so she do."

"What for?"

"Sure we argify, an' she do get the best of it wid a broom!"

Shorty had a good laugh at this mournful confession of the old porter.

"Faith, yer a fool if yees iver gets married. But I must look to me slate," he added, turning to it. "Troth, here's business. Be jabbers, I think everybody in ther house wants an early call in ther mornin'. 'Mr. Davis, called at two, to take the night express.' Sure, but he's a crabbed ould rascal. He do

be after lavin' orders ter be called, an' not ter lave him till he gets up, and then he do foight me like the divil."

"Sleepy, most likely."

"Yes, an' ugly, too. But it's near toime that I called him. An' here's Mr. Schwartz, the bloody ould Dutchman, he wants ter be called at two; and here's Mr. Scudder, he's ter be called at two. Phat's the matter wid 'em all, I wonder?" and so he ran through the list as Shorty had arranged it, all the while muttering and wondering how it was that everybody wanted to be called at two o'clock.

Shorty was taking it all in and waiting to see what would come of it. Finally Dennis started up stairs for the general wake.

"Now for der racket," said Shorty, leaping upon the counter in the office.

Presently he heard Dennis pounding on a door up on the floor above.]

"Misther Davis! Git up!" he called.

"What the devil do you want?" he heard, in a muffled voice.

"It's two o'clock."

"Well, what the devil of it?"

"Yer want ter git up."

"You lie, you fool! Clear out!"

"No, I won't. Git up."

"Go to the devil!"

"I'll be back ag'in, prisintly."

And Dennis started to go for another sleeper.

"If you do, I'll brain you!"

Then he went for Schwartz. Rapping on the door once or twice, there was a grunt in reply, when he told him it was time to get up.

So he went from one door to another, until he had got nearly the whole house alarmed, after which he returned to the door of Mr. Davis, where he pounded some more, as his instructions had always been to never leave a person until he was up and awake.

"Will yees git up, Misther Davis?"

"Confound you, are you there again?" he yelled.

"Yes. Will yees git up?"

"Yes, I will, if you don't clear out."

"There's a foine man," said Dennis (for, in fact, the old fellow always made about so much row, and he had a deal of trouble in getting him up before he had finished his sleep, although he really wanted to get up at the appointed times.)

"Are yees awake?" he called, after another rap.

Just then the door of the old fellow's room was thrown open, accompanied by a string of oaths long enough to make a neckchain for the devil.

"Confound your Irish addle-head! what do you mean by waking me up at this hour?"

And he accompanied the inquiry with a smack in the snoot that made the porter's teeth rattle.

Then there came a mixture of Irish and English oaths, and a regular set to, followed by a clench, and in half of no time Dennis and Davis, in his night-shirt, came rolling over and over down stairs into the office where Shorty sat.

There they continued the fighting and swearing, when the others who had been called rushed down to take part in the rumpus.

And the clerk, and landlord, and servants, and guests, in various conditions of night-clothes, rushed down to see what it all meant.

Shorty was the only one who knew.

It was fully ten minutes after the porter and Davis had been pulled apart before anybody could get half of an idea of what it was all about.

"Confound his thick head, he is drunk," said Davis, savagely.

"An', bad luck ter yees, if yees hadn't a gone ter bed as full as a goat, ye'd a known when yer should git up."

"So I did, you old idiot. I left word to be called at five o'clock."

"And I at six," said another man.

"Dot vas der same dings mit me," put in Schwartz, and the others followed suit, stating various other hours.

"What is the meaning of this, Dennis?" demanded the landlord, as soon as he could be heard.

"Luck at ther slate, sur," and he handed it to him.

"This certainly calls for two o'clock for you all."

"Of course it do. Bad manners ter them, they don't know fat they want," said Dennis, savagely.

Here the clerk took a hand in and insisted that he had written the calls all right, but that somebody had altered the figures.

This was evident, but it was fortunate for Shorty that they did not suspect him. But after getting things in shape once more all hands returned to their bed, Shorty among the others.

And you bet he enjoyed a good laugh when he got out of sight.

But there was more cursing and growling the next morning; for Dennis had not got over his mad yet, and resolved to let them sleep until doomsday before he would waken them.

Shorty was never suspected, and after he had laughed over the joke with the other guests as long as he liked, he started out again in search of his dad.

It was about ten o'clock when he rang the bell of Mr. Bundle's house and asked to see that gentleman.

He was shown into the parlor and informed that he would see him in a few minutes.

It was an elegantly furnished room, and Shorty contemplated it with curious emotions.

"Golly; if he should prove to be my dad, I'd have a soft thing of it," he thought.

Presently the door opened and Mr. Bundle entered the room. At first sight he seemed to fill the bill.

Shorty thought so, and handed him the letter.

He opened and read it. Then he looked at his strange little visitor for a moment without speaking a word, and Shorty thought it was a curious sort of

a look, and one with but little fatherly feeling in it, or even a friendly one; but somehow it seemed to him that the old fellow's mug was familiar.

"Are you a lunatic or a scoundrel; which?" the old man finally asked.

"I gives it up, boss," said Shorty.

"Who is this man Polly?"

"Don't yer know Polly?"

"Never heard of him that I know of."

"Sergeant Polly used to be on der perlice."

"I never knew nor never heard of such a man."

Shorty began to feel foolish, and to fear that the sergeant had put up a job on him in payment for the many he had formerly worked on him.

"Dat's funny," he mused.

"Funny?"

"Yes. He give me dat letter ter ye."

"Do you know what is in the letter?" the old man asked, severely.

"Nix. Never read it."

"Do you wish me to read it to you?"

"Well, if yer don't mind," replied Shorty, all the while fearful he was in for something.

"Very well, I will do so. Listen:

"NEW YORK, July 10, 1875.

"DEAR SIR.—The bearer of this, one Shorty, has got a crank into his head that you are his father, or he says so, and at his solicitation I give him this letter, although personally unknown to you. But if you think it best to give him the grand lightning bounce, you have my permission, for he is one of the worst jokers in the country. Yours,

"EX-SERGEANT POLLY."

"Now, sir, what do you think of that?" he asked, after finishing the reading.

"I think dat der sarge has got me."

"Got you, you rascal, what do you mean?" and the old fellow leaped to his feet.

"Well, I'm looking for my dad, an' he told me dat he knowed an ole duffer dat filled der bill."

"You scoundrel! How dare you come in my own house? Do you know who I am? After making me miss the train in the Grand Central Depot; after tumbling me down into the car-pit and bruising and abusing me in the most outrageous manner, you have the sublime impudence to follow me to my home. You—"

"Was dat you?" asked Shorty, in surprise.

"Was it me? I'll soon show you whether it was me or not," and he rang a bell savagely.

"Well, yer know how it is," stammered Shorty.

"Yes, I know how it is, and I'll soon show you how it is. Here, Sam, fire this fellow into the street, and kick him clear down to the river," he added, speaking to a big colored man that answered the bell.

The man went for Shorty, who stood on his guard, and before he could reach him he butted him in the belly, knocking him against an aquarium and tumbling both over, and then with a like compliment for Mr. Bundle, landing him on top of the darkey, he seized his hat and cane and started for the front door just in time to be pounded out of it by the big Irish girl who was sweeping there.

"Oh, if I don't get hunk wid Sarge Polly!" he muttered, as he made his way back to the hotel.

CHAPTER V.

SHORTY was rather a badly used up joker when he reached his hotel, after his adventure in search of his dad at the house of Mr. Bundle, in Albany, and he lost no time in getting on board the steamer *Drew*, which was to sail that evening for New York.

It was two or three hours ahead of the advertised time for the steamer to start, but he felt sick and sore, and wanted to get out of sight and remain out until he reached home.

He laid off in his state-room for awhile, and tried to slick his ruffled feathers down a bit, and get himself into shape again.

But the task was not an easy one by any means. His hat resembled the collapsed bellows of a concertina quite as much as it did anything else; his shirt collar was broken open, and there was in his whole "git-up-and-git" something which would make one think that he had either been run through a threshing machine or had been fooling with the raising end of a mule.

So after finding that he could not repair himself so as to look presentable, he left the boat and called on a hatter; also a gents' furnishing store, and at the end of half an hour he returned, looking greatly improved.

But still he did not look happy, and he didn't feel happy, either. He felt sore in body and mind. Not that he couldn't take a joke almost as well as he could play one, but the racket which Sergeant Polly had played on him was so unexpected, so stunning, and touched him in such a tender spot, that he could hardly swallow it.

"Dat's one for der sarge. But wait till I get a chance back on him, dat's all. Dat's de wust bounce I ever got in my life, but I'll never let him know how it was. He'd have der laugh on me too good," said he, as he sat on the after-deck, looking at the people, who by this time began to flock on board.

"But I don't seem ter find my dad very much. Wonder if it's got out anyhow? What a racket it was ter find the same ole rooster dat I tackled once before. Wonder if Polly knowed it all der time? Well, it was a good one if he did, an' a good one if he didn't. Guess der ole man an' der nigger have got der belly-ache, anyway."

Thus he mused until the steamer's first bell aroused him from his reverie.

The same bell aroused somebody else; a whole family of them, in fact, for just then Shorty saw an old fellow running towards the steamer, with a huge

carpet bag in one hand and a great blue cotton umbrella in the other. This he was flourishing above his head and shouting at the top of his voice for the boat to hold on and not go until he got on board.

The old man was followed by his wife, who was similarly burdened, and she in turn by a daughter and two sons, each loaded with as much as they could carry, in the shape of bags and bandboxes, and each one of them was imitating their parents the best they could by shouting for the boat to wait for them, although it was a full half hour before there was any thought of sailing.

The ringing of the bell, however, made them believe that she was about to steam away, and this caused them to shout and flourish.

"Hold on! Stop her—stop her!" he yelled.

"Yes, stop her!" piped the old woman, red in the face, and scarcely able to speak, so nearly winded was she.

"S-t-o-p her!" chorused the sons, and then the daughter squealed the same thing, as they all ran towards the boat.

But the noise of the bell and the laughter of those who stood around, nearly drowned their voices.

"Hold on; don't go yet!" yelled the old man, and just then his plug hat blew off, and his wife planted one of her big feet in it. "Thunderation, S'phrony, can't yu see where yu're goin'?" he yelled, at the same time turning to recover his cady.

But she had got her foot into it and kept right along towards the gang-plank, wearing it as a sort of an overshoe, while the poor distressed husband yelled for her to stop, as she was ruining his Sunday-go-to-meeting hat.

But she had eyes and ears for nothing but getting on board of that steamboat, and, closely followed by the remainder of the family, she rushed down the gang-plank at break-neck speed, mashing the good looks out of her husband's hat at every step.

A perfect shout greeted them, and Shorty was so delighted that he forgot his own sores for the time being, and rushed below to see the fun.

"S'phrony Buckins, what in thunder du yu mean?" demanded her husband, throwing down his bag and umbrella the moment he got on board.

"Why—what's the matter, Seth?" she asked, never dreaming of what she had done.

"Matter, you great elephant!" and slamming her down upon a settee, he lifted up her foot and pulled his hat from it, amid a roar of laughter.

"Why, Seth Buckins!" she exclaimed.

"Seth thunder! Look at that hat," said he, holding it up before her.

"Why, Seth, how cum it there?"

"Bah! it blowed off, and yu put that thar big foot into it. Now look!"

Another shout of laughter greeted this.

"What in thunder be yu all laffin' 'bout?" the old man demanded, looking around indignantly.

"At your hat-block," suggested somebody, and then, of course, there was another laugh.

"Yu go tu thunder, and pump lightning' for three cents a clap," and he attempted to wipe off the mud and get his poor old hat into something like its original shape.

"Didn't have much time to spare, though, did we!" suggested the son.

"No, only about half an hour," said one of the colored waiters.

"What!" the whole family exclaimed, and the old woman leaped to her feet.

"Only about half an hour."

"Git out!"

"Hark! she's goin' now," said the daughter.

"Going to stay."

"Waal, by thunder!" But, say, mister, what on earth were yu ringin' them 'ere bells so for?"

"Oh, that was only the first bell. It will ring again before she starts."

"Waal, I swanny!" groaned the old fellow.

"An' only tu think, Seth, how we run!"

"An' only tu think how yu stepped yu're big foot into my best hat."

"Oh, Seth, I was so 'cited for fear the boat would go off an' leave us."

"Bah! Why didn't yu keep cool same's I did? I knowed the thing weren't a-goin'."

"But what made yu run so like blazes, then?" asked his son.

"Yu 'Lonzo Buckins—yu hold yu're tongue, or I'll warm yu're jacket for yu," said his father; and that young hopeful picked up his bag and began to walk away.

"Here, 'Lonzo, yu stay right here," said his mother. "Yu might get drowned or blowed up if yu get out of our sight."

"Please get out of the gangway," said a deckhand, hustling them out of the way.

"Gangway! Whar in thunder is a feller goin'?" demanded the old man.

"Go up stairs on deck."

They all got into the crowd which blocked up the waist of the boat.

"Here, I'll show you," said Shorty, speaking to the perplexed husband and father.

"Much 'bleged tu yu. Yu see this is the fust time we've ever been tu York, an' we don't know much 'bout steamboats."

"Dat's all right. I'll fix yer. Come 'long," and he led the way forward, followed by the whole family with fear and trembling.

Arriving at the engine-room, and seeing no one there, he motioned them in to take the finely upholstered seats which adorned the room.

"Dere yer be. Sit right down, an' make yerselves ter home," said he.

"Gosh! But this is nice," suggested the old man.

"Red velvet! Oh, I've hearn tell how nice they have these boats rigged up," said the wife.

"What's that that?" he asked, pointing to the

highly polished mechanism of the ponderous engine.

"Oh, that's der machinery dat makes her go."

"Yu don't go for tu say so! An' can we see it?"

"Cert. Take seats an' wait, but if any duffer tries ter fire yer out, don't go."

"What for?"

"Well, I'll tell yer. Yer see dis is der boss place, an' everybody's tryin' ter get it. But yer here fust, ole man, an' don't yer let any snoozer fire yer out; understand?"

"Yu bet I du. They can't play none of their rutes on me, if I be green."

"That's right. I'll see yer some more bimeby," said Shorty, turning away.

"Waal, that's nice of him," said the wife.

"Yas; putty nice sort of a little chap."

"He looks like that chap they used to talk about in *The Boys of New York*. Shorty—they called him," said the boy.

"Guess not. He's got somethin' tu du with the boat, I'm sure," said his mother.

"But arn't that nice?" said the old man, pointing at the machinery.

"Yes; but arn't these seats nice?" and she bobbed herself up and down on the cushions in order to test their upholstery.

They had now taken possession of the engineer's room, and seated themselves for the journey to New York.

Shorty lingered around where he could see what transpired without being seen himself.

They were there fully five minutes before the engineer made his appearance and recognized the family group, having seen them when they came on the boat.

"Halloo! what are you doing here?" he asked, smiling, though, in spite of himself, for just then Seth was trying to wipe the bruises and wrinkles out of his hat with the sleeve of his coat.

"Doin'?" Why, sittin' down. Don't yu see what we're doin'?" asked the head of the family, looking up resentfully, for he instantly suspected that the questioner was one of the fellows whom Shorty had spoken about, who wished to get their places away from them.

"Well, you can't stay here."

"Can't?"

"No. No one allowed in this room."

"Git out! What are yu here for, then?"

"This is my room; I'm the engineer."

"I don't care a darn if yu're the captain, yu can't pull me out of my seat, yu bet."

"One of the officers put us here, an' told us tu stay here just as long as we wanted tu," said the wife.

"What nonsense. Somebody has played a joke on you. Come, vacate!"

"Not much; I know yu're little game. Yu want tu get our seats."

"Yes, that's just exactly what I want."

"Waal, yu can't du it."

"Can't?"

"Not unless yu are stronger'n I be," said the old fellow, leaping to his feet, and smacking his fists together savagely.

"Now I don't want any trouble with you, for I know that somebody has played a joke on you, but you must get out."

"I'll bet that was Shorty, Jimmy," said Alonzo, whispering to his brother.

The engineer rang a bell which summoned five or six stalwart coal heavers.

"Now, will you leave, or shall I have you snaked out?"

"Snaked be darned—I—"

"Hold on, Seth, maybe he's right," said the wife.

"But yer hern with that little man said?"

"Well, maybe he was wrong."

"He was most likely a joker."

At that instant the pilot pulled the hammer which struck the big gong just over their heads, and with a yell they fled from the room.

This created a loud laugh, of course, and as the engineer took the "bar" to work the engine from the instructions which he received through the bell from the pilot, he sent the coal-heavers back to their fire-rooms and turned his whole attention to business.

The frightened family, just as soon as they saw that nothing had exploded, and that they were still in the land of the living, ventured cautiously back and took a look at the machinery now in motion.

"Jewhittiker, S'phrony, how's that?" asked the old man. "Look at her!"

S'phrony was astonished into muteness.

"Say, yu, is she goin' now?" he ventured to ask.

But the engineer did not reply.

It was evident, however, that he had a right there and they had not. So there was no other conclusion to arrive at except that they had been made the victims of a practical joke.

After watching the ponderous engine for a few minutes, they sauntered aft, and finally found themselves on the after deck, where hundreds of others were congregated.

"What I want, S'phrony, is tu find that are little cuss as told us to stay thar," said he, as all five of them lugged their bags and bundles along with them.

"Lan' sakes, Seth, maybe he didn't know," said she, in a conciliatory tone.

"Maybe! Thunder! He played a darned trick on us, an' I'm goin' tu spank him afore I get tu New York, see 'f I dont."

They all managed to get seats together, and had got down to enjoying the thing, when Shorty, from among the crowd where he kept out of sight, yelled: "Tickets!" and the old fellow leaped to his feet.

"By gosh, S'phrony! I s'pose I've got to pay all

that money now. Where is it?" he asked, looking around.

"Down stairs," suggested someone.

"Oh!" and away he started.

"Du be keerful, Seth, an' not fall into the water," called his wife.

Shorty continued to follow him without being observed, and after inquiring of nearly everybody on board the boat where the place was to pay fare, he finally managed to find the captain's office. But there was a long line of passengers awaiting their turn.

"Whar's the captain of this 'ere boat?" he called, loudly.

Someone pointed to the window where the clerk was exchanging tickets for money, and away he

was the supper gong, which reverberated through the boat and made the usual horrible noise.

The whole family huddled together, and stood as though expecting the next minute was to be their last. But the mystery was soon explained, and a grand rush was made for the dining-cabins, although our friends did nothing of the kind.

No—no. They had their grub with them, and getting on the forward deck, they proceeded to go for it as though nearly starved.

Shorty had no appetite for supper so long as there was any fun to be had, and so he lingered in the vicinity of the countryman and his family, and watched his chances.

"Gracious, S'phrony! isn't this high?" asked the

"Don't be a fule, S'phrony!" and he started toward the door behind which Shorty was hidden.

He came upon him unawares, and recognizing him at a glance, he at once knew that he had played the joke on him.

"Come here, yu little runt," said he, seizing him by the collar.

"Oh—oh! lemme be!" said Shorty.

"No, yu don't; I've got yu now; come 'long;" and he pulled him out upon the deck and into the presence of his astonished family.

"What's der matter wid yu?"

"Yu rascal, what're yu tryin' to scare us for?" he asked, shaking him roughly.

"I didn't do noffin'," whined Shorty.



"Confound your little doggoned, onery pate! what the devil did you catch hold of me for?" "I wanted yer," said Shorty. "Yes, we wanted yer," added Shorty, Jr.

bolted, treading on numerous corns, and pushing people this way and that, and tried to force a passage up to head-quarters.

"Stand back!"

"Get out!"

"What are you doing?"

"Get into line and take your turn!" and other shouts greeted him,

"Whar is it!" he asked, wildly.

"Get back there into line!"

"Gol darn it, whar is it?"

He was finally hustled from one place to another, when he tried to break into the line and get some other person's place, until he reached the end of the line with about fifty ahead of him.

"Waal, I'll be darned! I hope tu gracious you're satisfied now," he muttered.

"Look out for yer pocket-books!" cried Shorty; and quick as a flash the old countryman grabbed his pocket in which he had his money, and glared savagely and wildly around.

"Darn ther skunk that goes tu feelin' round my clothes," said he, and everybody laughed immoderately.

At that instant another passenger, who had taken a position behind him on the line, happened to jostle against the old fellow, and he quickly turned and knocked him down.

This created a wild excitement, for, taken in connection with Shorty's warning, everybody seemed to think that a pickpocket was actually at work in the crowd.

But the officers and deck-hands soon straightened matters out, and kept a watch upon the suspected passenger until he had obtained his ticket and got away from the crowd.

But the old fellow had been delayed so long that his wife became anxious about him, and so the whole family went in search of him.

The next thing to frighten them almost to death

old fellow, glancing around, with his big mouth full of provender.

"Seth, it's tremenjus," said she.

"Look out!" shouted Shorty, from behind a door.

The entire family arose to their feet, tipping over their victuals, and creating quite a sensation.

"Where is it?" asked the man, gazing wildly around, for notwithstanding the beauty by which he was surrounded, he still had a dim idea that danger in some shape or other, hovered over them.

"Du you see anything, Seth?"

"No; but—"

"I guess something's going tu burst," said the daughter, clinging to the frightened mother.

"Maybe, but let's all stick together, an' if wurst comes to wurst, we'll all die together."

"Nonsense; I don't b'lieve it's anything" said the father, picking up the spilled doughnuts.

They finally came to the conclusion the alarm did not proceed from any imminent danger that threatened them, and were soon munching their supper again.

Shorty was watching them, and after they got well at it again, he pushed the door open and once more yelled:

"Look out! Go for der life preservers!"

"Oh, Lord! I knowed it!"

"Dear me! oh, mama, save me!" yelled the daughter, clinging to her mother.

"What in thunder—" and Seth again got up and began to look around.

Nobody else appeared to be frightened, and there was no indication of danger, and the thought struck him that the same old joker was at work again.

"I say, S'phrony, du yu take?" he asked.

"Take what?" she asked, looking around.

"Wait a minit," and he started to look for the supposed joker.

"Don't leave us, Seth, for I'm 'fraid."

"Yu didn't, eh? How 'bout puttin' us down in that thar biler-room?"

"Yes, how 'bout that?" put in the wife.

"It wern't me; lemme go."

"Not much. Yu've had yu're fun, now I'll have mine;" and suiting the action to the word, he seized the runt by the slack of his trousers and the collar of his coat, lifted him up to a horizontal position, and swinging him backward and forward once or twice, banged him head first against the partition, driving his new hat over his eyes, and making it even a worse wreck than the old one was.

Shorty was yelling bloody murder, and the family was encouraging the old man to go in and pay the whole bill at once.

Finally he stood him on his feet again.

"Thar, yu ornery cuss, how du yu like that?" he asked, triumphantly.

Shorty was trying to pull himself out of his hat, that was smashed clear down to his shoulders.

Finally he got out of it, and getting himself together as speedily as possible, he started for his state-room, a badly-banged and demoralized joker.

He had once more awakened the wrong passenger.

"Go, consarn yure runty picter, an' if yu try tu come any more of yure jimcracks 'round me, I'll fix yu so yure mother won't know yu," shouted the old fellow after him.

Shorty made no reply, and never stopped to ask for further particulars. He had got all he wanted.

This trip to Albany had been a dear one, having cost him two hats and considerable rough usage.

"Guess I'd better sell out," he muttered, as he closed his state-room door; "I don't seem tu have much fun any more, an' everybody else has fun wid me. But I'll get hunk wid dat ole haymow afore we get ter New York, or my name isn't Shorty, an' I arn't in search of my dad."

CHAPTER VI.

It was now dark, and the noble *Drew* was speeding her way down the Hudson towards New York from Albany.

"I'll get hunk on dat ole duffer or ast," he muttered, trying to get his hat into some shape. "Dat's two 'dicers' dat dis job's cost me. Hav' ter buy my hats by der case, I guess."

"As for the countryman, he and his wily felt first-rate over the affair, and laughed loud and long, as did several others who witnessed the racket.

"Goldarn his little picter, I reckon he won't fule 'round me much more. Ther darn skunk," he added, addressing those who stood around, "why, what du yu think he did tu us, fust off?"

be some darned contrivin' plan," and he winked at her very wisely, as much as to say that somebody wanted to steal her away from him.

"That's so. We'll take the children back up stairs an' set up all night so as tu be ready for 'em if they tempt to play anything rusty on us."

"All right."

By this time, however, the two boys had got into their bunks and were asleep. To wake them again was almost an impossibility, although both of the parents yelled until other people in the cabin, who were trying to get to sleep, began to yell at them in return, and to give them all sorts of growled advice.

Finally they concluded to let the boys sleep, and in order to make sure of where they were so as to be

Placing the fire-cracker on top of the bag which the old fellow held between his knees, he lighted the fuse, and stepped aside to await results.

The explosion startled everybody in the saloon, and the next instant the air was full of flying bags, boxes, arms, legs, petticoats, hats and yells as the old man and woman leaped upward from their seats, and revolved once or twice in the air.

"Oh! ah! wah! she's bust!" exclaimed the old farmer, coming down squash upon his wife's bandbox, and smashing it as flat as a pancake.

"Seth—oh, Seth, save me!" whined the old woman, crawling out from behind a sofa where she had landed when she came down.

The crowd roared with laughter, and an officer rushed forward to see what it all meant



"I'll tell yer all about it, jedge," said Shorty, but the judge was pounding for order, and the spectators were convulsed with laughter.

"Give it up," said someone.

"Waal, I guess yu better for yu'd never guess. Yu see as how we never rid on a steamboat afore, an' we didn't know whar tu go in the darned thing, an' that little rascal took us down into the biler room whar the engineer stays, an' told us it war the best place in the boat, an' not tu let anybody put us out. Fact, I snummy, an' I cum darned near lickin' the engineer cause he wanted us tu get out. How's that for deviltrum?" and he ha-ha'd loudly.

Everybody laughed, but the old fellow didn't seem to see that it was at his expense, and appeared to regard himself as a hero.

"They can't play rates on me if I never did ride on a steamboat afore," he added, with a warning shake of his head.

Well, Shorty kept out of sight for awhile during all this, and the countryman and his family wandered from one end of the boat to the other, commenting on everything, and bothering everybody with their questions. Each one of them clung to their carpet-bag and bundles, for they were so fearful of losing them that they kept a death like grip on everything that they owned, and would not set them down even for a moment.

But presently the children began to feel sleepy and to ask where their beds were. One of the porters showed them down into the cabin where their berths were located. They were scattered around in different places throughout the big cabin, and it was fully half an hour before they were all spotted. Even then there was no bank for the old woman and the daughter, and it required considerable argument to convince them that it was necessary for everything wearing petticoats to sleep in another part of the boat.

She wouldn't have it. She "kicked" like a mule at the idea of sleeping away from her husband, and finally he kicked as well.

"That's right, S'phrony, I won't leave yu. Yt may

able to find them quickly should anything happen, the old man drew a piece of charcoal from his pocket and made a black cross on the white partition just over each of their berths.

But every now and then somebody would yell at them from their berths, and tell them to dry up and clear out, so disgusted were they at their doings.

"Goldarn yu, I don't know how many there is on yu, but I ken lick 'bout twenty o' yu if yu'll only come out an' take it," he said, as they were about leaving the cabin.

"Go shoot yourself, old Hayseed!"

"Give your chin a rest!"

"Button up your lip!"

"Pull down your vest!"

"Go jump overboard!" and a dozen other calls were hurled at him.

However, he paid no further attention to them, but started up to the saloon deck resolved on sleeping there in the luxurious chairs.

And by this time they were all tired enough to go to sleep quickly, and after selecting a good locality, they all doubled up and proceeded to snore.

By this time Shorty had got slicked up again, and now put in an appearance. He took in the situation at a glance, and saw that whoever made it lively for the countryman would be popular.

Taking a large fire-cracker, which he happened to have in his pocket, Shorty stealthily approached the old fellow, who sat with a carpet-bag in each hand, on either side of the chair, and with another one between his legs.

But asleep though he was, he never relaxed his grip on the bags. Neither did his wife, who had artfully arranged her boxes and bundles in such a way as to be awakened the instant anyone should touch either of them.

Twenty or thirty passengers who were in the saloon gathered around to see what Shorty was about to do. They knew him.

"Stop her—stop her! She's bust!"

"Run for the boys, Seth!"

By this time he comprehended the fact that people were laughing instead of being alarmed.

"What in thunder—" he muttered.

"Oh, Seth, what is it?"

"Waal, that's kersactly what I'd like tu know," said he, getting up from her flattened bandbox.

"Are you sure she hasn't burst, Seth?"

This produced another laugh.

"What is the trouble here?" asked the officer, working his way through the crowd.

"Oh, mister, what is it?" asked the wife, tearfully.

"That's what I'd like to find out."

"Did yu hear her?"

"Who?"

"When she went off?"

"Where?"

"When she burst?"

"What?"

"I thort she'd bust all tu pieces!"

"Well, what was the noise, anyway?"

"Captin, that beats me. As I said afore, I don't know, but it sent us both up."

The crowd laughed again.

"Darned if I don't b'l'ave somebody played a trick on us. Whar's that little runt?" asked the old man, looking around for Shorty. "Thar he is, by thunder!" he exclaimed, catching a sight of Shorty, who was, like the others, convulsed with laughter.

"How yer was, ole man?" he asked.

"Better look out for me, Mr. Runt," he said.

"What's der matter?"

"I don't know; but if I catch you foolin' 'round me I'll spile yer beauty."

"Oh, swim out!"

"What?" they both exclaimed.

"Yer over yer head, ole man!"

"What are you doing here, anyway?" asked the officer.

"Waal, we war takin' a snooze."
 "Let's see your tickets."
 "Look out, Seth," put in his wife; "it may be some kind o' a trick to steal yer tickets."
 "Show me your tickets!"
 The old fellow produced them.
 "These are cabin tickets; you want to go below," said he, pointing the way.
 "But I don't want to go."
 "Well, you must!"
 "Dogone it, I won't! I've paid my fare on this ere steamboat, an' I'm goin' tu ride."
 "All right, but you must go where you belong. Come, hurry up."

"Dang it, I thort yu wanted us to hurry down!"
 "Well, hurry down, then."
 "How much will it cost to stay here?"
 "Only stateroom passengers have a right in this saloon, and as there are no more staterooms on this trip, you will have to go below, anyway."
 "Gol darn yer old scow, anyway! Ever catch me ridin' on it ag'in, an' ye'll catch a white blackbird, yu bet."
 Picking up their scattered baggage, they started along toward the stairway.
 "Good-by, Sethy, ole man," said Shorty, laughing.
 "Goldarn yer picter!" and the old fellow made a dive for him.

But Shorty got out of the way by dodging behind some of the passengers, and the old fellow was seized by a couple of colored porters.

He struggled fiercely, but they rushed him down stairs followed by his wife and daughter.

It was a terrible infliction, but he had to go into the gentlemen's cabin, and the others into the ladies', which, of course, parted them for the remainder of the night, although neither of them slept much.

"Dat's square wid one of dem," mused Shorty, as he after ward waddled away to his stateroom.

What ever became of them he never knew, for he slept late the next morning, and nearly everybody had gone ashore when he got up in New York.

The first thing he did was to take a carriage and drive to a hat store, where a new cady took the place of the one into which he had been driven by the indignant old countryman, after which he went home.

The Kid, Shorty, Jr., was anxiously waiting, and glad to see him, for he had been studying up deviltry during his absence, and had one or two jobs all ready to work on him.

"How yer was, dad?" he asked.

"Fine's a new hat. Tell me somethin'."

"Got nuffin'."

"How's der ole hen?" asked Shorty, referring to the woman with whom they boarded.

"Oh, she's cacklin' yet. Did yer find yer dad?"

"Well, not much."

"How much?"

"Found der same old rooster dat we met in der Gran' Central Depot."

"What!" exclaimed the Kid, laughing.

"Fact."

"What did he say?"

"Say! What did he do?"

"Fired yer out!"

Shorty laughed, but made no reply.

"I say, ole man."

"Say what?"

"Yer wants ter get yerself upholstered if yer goin' inter der daddy business much," said the Kid, laughing louder than ever.

Shorty had nothing to say. His mind was busy with trying to think how he should work it to get square with Sergeant Polly for the trick he had played upon him through the letter of introduction to Mr. Bundle, up at Albany.

That day he received a letter from his old pal and partner, Shanks, asking him to meet him at the Fifth avenue hotel the following day, on his arrival from Buffalo, as he had a proposition to make to him.

This letter pleased him very much, for he had not heard from Shanks in a long time, and had almost lost sight and memory of him, and both he and the Kid looked forward to the meeting with much pleasure, for they had enjoyed many happy hours with his lathy nibs.

But first of all to get hunk with Polly.

The ex-sergeant was a bachelor, and one who prided himself on it. Shorty knew this, and concluded to work a racket on that point.

Shorty had a negro washerwoman with whom he was on good terms, of course, as he always paid her a good price for her work; and some years before she had been married to a white man, who got possession of a few hundred dollars she had saved up, and decamped with it, since which time she had not seen or heard anything of him.

This was a sore spot in her life, and she was continually talking about it. When she brought the washing that afternoon, Shorty said to her:

"Chloe, would yer know dat husband of yours if yer seen him?"

"Why, chile, I don't know. Why?" asked she.

"I think I know him," said Shorty.

"Oh, Lor', chile, yer don't say so!"

"What name did he marry you by?"

"Sam Johnson."

"All right. He used ter wear whiskers, yer say?"

"Yas, all ober his face."

"Good'nough. He's shaved up now, an' only wears a shoe-brush on his upper lip, an' slings der name of Polly."

"Golly!"

"No—Polly."

"Where am he?"

"I know where he hangs out."

"Tell me, Mr. Shorty, an' I go fo' him shuah!"

"Will yer—will yer have him 'rested?"

"Honey, I make him gib me back dat three hundred dollars, or I shove him up."

"No; yer wants ter 'rest him for 'bandonment."

"I 'rest him anyway."

"All right. Come right 'long wid me," and he hurried her over to the Jefferson Market Police Court, only a little distance away.

Here he steered her, and helped make out the complaint, on which a warrant was made out for the arrest of his old friend Polly, and in less than an hour he was taken before the judge.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, for he saw nobody around whom he recognized.

"Well, it means that you are arrested," said the judge, who somehow half suspected a joke.

"But what for?" asked Polly, indignantly.

"For abandonment."

"For abandoning who?"

"Your wife."

"Good Heavens! There's a mistake here. I have no wife, judge."

"Mrs. Johnson, step forward."

The wench approached and lifted her veil.

"Good God!" exclaimed the victim, while a ripple of laughter ran through the court-room.

"Mrs. Johnson, is this your husband?" asked the judge.

"Jedge, fo' de Lor' I ken scarcely tell. He hab chop' his whiskers off since he ran away from me wid my three hundred dollars. But I am shuah dat he am de scoundrel," said she, while Polly nearly fell to the floor.

"Have you any witnesses?"

"Jedge, dar am one ob my customers dat knows him."

"Where is he?"

Just then Shorty walked forward.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Polly, springing towards him. "What is the meaning of all this, Shorty?"

"Be you der court?" asked Shorty, looking at him with a sneer.

"But you—"

"Who are you?" demanded the judge.

"I'm der original Shorty."

"Do you know the prisoner?"

"I's seen him afore, jedge."

"Do you know whether this woman is his wife or not?"

"Well, I shouldn't wonder. He's on it."

"Shorty, what do you mean?" pleaded Polly, who was so utterly confused that he didn't tumble to it that the whole thing was a joke.

"I don't want ter talk wid you."

"Silence, prisoner! What else do you know about the case?" asked the judge, addressing Shorty.

"I don't know nuffin' 'bout it, only dis ole gal works for me, and some white duffer married her for her money an' den skipped. She asked my advice, an' I told her dat de only man dat I should suspect was him, and she had him snatched in here," replied Shorty.

"Oh, you rascal, this is one of you rackets," said Polly, laughing.

"No, sir; it is one of mine," said the judge.

"But there is nothing in it."

"We shall see."

"But this Shorty is one of the worst jokers in the world, and he has put this up on me."

"We shall be sure of that. Mrs. Johnson, do you recognize the gentleman as your husband?"

"Jedge, yer see I didn't know him long, an' it's been five yeah since he lit out on me."

"But have you no means of telling?"

"I can't swar ter him, jedge, but if he'll gib me back my money, I'll luf him go."

"Jedge, this is a most outrageous and ridiculous farce. I never saw this woman before in my life; and do I look like a person who would marry a negro wench?" demanded the victim.

"Well, we can't always tell. I come across some queer people here," said the judge, smiling.

"But I can produce a host of witnesses who have known me for years. I assure you that it is all a joke put up by that little runt," said he, pointing to Shorty.

"It may be; but this lady evidently does not regard it as a joke. You had better give her back her money."

"But I never took any money from her; never saw her before in my life that I know of."

"Look out for taffy, judge," said Shorty.

"I think I'll hold you until you can send for witnesses," said the judge.

"What! will you compel me to humiliate myself in this manner and give this little rascal the dead wood on me?"

"Does he talk like your husband, Mrs. Johnson?" asked the judge, turning to the confused woman.

"He war a mighty sweet chinner, jedge, fo' he buzzed me out ob three hundred dollars, clean cash dat I earn washin'," said she.

"But do you recognize his voice?"

"I can't say dat I do, but I wants my three hundred dollars."

"Oh, well, if you can't swear that he is the man who married you, I shall have to discharge him. What do you say?"

"I gubs it up, judge; only I wants my money."

"You had evidently rather have your money than your husband. Well, I can't blame you much, but I shall discharge this man until you are able to produce more proof of what you say."

"Am I discharged?" asked Polly.

"Yes."

"Oh, what a wretched farce! Where is that little duffer!" he asked, glancing around.

But Shorty had skipped out and was nowhere to be found, and while he was explaining the matter to the court and the reporters, the woman also disappeared.

"Judge, I don't mind a joke, but this is rather a grim one. I played a trick on him the other day, and he put up this racket to get square with me. He is the worst in the world, and you certainly must have heard of him."

"Oh, yes, I have often heard of his pranks. But I advise you to let him alone in the future, for he came very near getting you into a bad snap," said the judge.

"That's so; but he wouldn't have carried it far enough to injure me. I know him. In fact, I was the first one that brought him out years ago. But I'll get square with him for this."

All hands enjoyed a hearty laugh over the case, and after being assured by the reporters that they would say nothing about it in the papers, he treated all hands, and then started for home, sick of joking.

That evening he received the following very characteristic letter from Shorty:

"OLE MAN:—How yer was? Want ter play some more rackets on me? How 'bout dat wench. Guess I's square now.
 SHORTY."

"Well, I guess he is," mused Polly, "but if I don't make him sick yet, I'll get sicker than I am now."

That night Shorty and the Kid went for their landlady.

They paid her a big price, but she gave "queer" grub, and so they resolved on a hurrah at her expense, determined to get their money's worth in that way if in no other.

So they got a mask and made a dummy man, which they placed in her bed, and when she saw it she raised the house, the neighbors and the police in about two minutes with her yells.

It created a big disturbance, but the boarders had a bellyful of fun out of it, and better grub afterwards.

But the next thing on the programme was their old friend Shanks.

In the meantime, however, how about Shorty's dad?

CHAPTER VII.

THE next evening both Shorty and the Kid were at the Fifth Avenue Hotel at the appointed hour to meet Shanks.

And Shanks was there to meet them.

I take it for granted that the readers know Shanks almost as well as they do Shorty.

But they had not met in a long time, and Shanks had changed considerably.

The meeting between them was of the most cordial kind, and going to Shanks' room, he ordered a bottle, and they sat down for a talk.

"It's good for der toothache to see yer, ole man," said Shorty, after they were seated.

"Dat's so," added the Kid.

"Well, Shorty, I'm deuced glad to see both you and the Kid. How have you been all the while?" asked Shanks.

"Fine's a next year's silk hat."

"And the bantam?" he asked, pulling Shorty, Jr.'s ear.

"Oh, he's too healthy altogeder," said Shorty.

"Full of deviltry yet?"

"Wus an' wus! Shankey, ole man, dat kid'll bring my grey wig down with sorrow ter der pawnshop," and Shorty tried to look like a grief-stricken parent, at which Shanks laughed merrily.

"Dat arn't so, Shankey. I'm better ter my dad den he is ter his'n," said the Kid.

"Guess dat's so," mused the old man.

"But you must remember that he's only a chip of the old block."

"Chip! He bosses der ole block."

"Den who's der blockhead or blockhead?"

"Oh, take a twist in yer gab pipe."

"Glad it arn't a gas pipe."

"Well, Shankey, tell us somethin' 'bout yerself. Where yer been all der while?" asked Shorty, turning the subject.

"Been—been almost everywhere."

"Been in der show biz?"

"No; but I've been making a holy show of myself a good part of the time."

"How?"

"Well, soon after we split I took it into my head to start speculation. This took me to 'Frisco, the headquarters of speculating, and then I went into buying mining stock. I put all my money into it, and in less than a week I put it out."

"What—scooped?"

"Cleaned."

"Well?"

"But I pulled myself together again; raised a few hundreds on my sparks, and went in again. This time I made. Came out a thousand ahead. Then I went in again, and in less than six months I was worth nearly half a million."

"Whew!" exclaimed both of his listeners.

"Fact; but I didn't take it all away with me. Only wish I had. Well, business began to look shakv, and I bought a mine. That settled me. It sunk me before I could sink a shaft."

"Scooped again?"

"Actually wiped. But I sold out for enough to take me to Australia, and away I went, still determined to get even somehow. Then I had all sorts of adventures—from peddling tobacco, to running a circus. To make a long story bob-tailed, I have been fiddling around Australia, Russia, China, Japan, Turkey, Italy, Germany, France, England, and here I am, with

only two or three hundred dollars left to show for it."

"Well, Shankey, ole man, I don't wonder dat yer looked changed," said Shorty.

"Why, dad, he says dere arn't much 'change' in him," said the Kid.

"No place like home, is dere?"

"You are right, Shorty; there's no place like the boss country, America, and if anybody don't whistle the tune that way, why, let 'em try it as I have," said Shanks.

"Now yer shout it. Well, what yer goin' to do now?"

"Well, ask me an easier one; I'm here and I'll see what I can get my finger into."

"Oh, der's lots of things," said the Kid.

"But now tell me something about yourself, Shorty. You don't seem to have changed much; you look as if the world was using you pretty well. What are you up to?"

"Well, my principal biz lately has been searchin' for my dad."

"Your what?" asked Shanks, while the Kid roared with laughter.

"Shut up, you little runt!" yelled Shorty; "I wish you didn't have a dad."

"So do I, so I could have some fun looking for him."

"What is this you are giving me, Shorty?"

"Plumb biz, Shankey."

"Searching for your dad? I don't understand."

"Well, I don't exactly. Maybe you remember der story of my life."

"Yes. You were found somewhere."

"Yes, an' dragged up, and kicked inter good luck. Well, yer see, Shankey, I loafed around an' lived on my 'shug' for several years, an' one day I read a story in *The Boys of New York* 'bout a chap as was found somethin' same's I was, who found his dad and everythin' was hunky. So I made up my mind dat I'd find my dad an' know who I am. Dat's der wiggle of it."

"Well, have you found him yet?"

"Not much; not ter any great extent. But I've tried several times," said he, with a broad grin which caused the Kid to laugh loudly.

"But what clews have you?"

"Not a clew, only a fortune-teller told me ter go for a little old duffer wid a wart on his bugle."

"And have you found such a person?"

"Two or three of 'em."

"And they weren't the right ones?"

"Well, they rather seemed ter shake der honor of bein' responsible for me. But I haven't given up der racket yet."

"That beats me, Shorty," said Shanks, laughing.

"So it does me, ole man."

"The idea of your ever having a dad. And yet of course you must have had one. But that's the last business out, searching for a father whom you never saw that you know of. At the same time you may find him, after all. Stranger things have happened in this romance called living."

"Oh, I'll find him yet, yer bet. Der fact is, ole man, couldn't die happy without having a paternal spankin'."

"Den I oughter die happy," said Shorty, Jr.

"I'm afraid dat yer won't. You'll die wid yer boots on some day for playin' yer tricks."

"Well, I don't care. I'll die with a grin on."

"And so you have got all your money yet?" mused Shanks.

"Yes, and had a bang-up time on der interest."

"Then I suppose you have given up the show business altogether?"

"Yes. Haven't blacked up since I saw yer."

"And have no notion of doing so again?"

"Well, I d'know. It's awful dull. But I manage ter have a little fun now an' then, an' my big biz is ter bring up der Kid in der way he should go, an' find his granddaddy."

"Then I guess you have got your hands full."

"You bet I have, Shankey."

"Well, I'd like to start some sort of a show on the road if I had the money. Loan me a thousand."

"An' let me go wid him," added the Kid.

"That's so; I'll give you an interest in it, besides paying you the thousand."

"Biz is bad on der road now, ole man," said Shorty, thoughtfully.

"So I hear. But if you will lend me your name, and let me take the Kid, I'll bet I can make a barrel of money," said Shanks, earnestly.

"Dat's so, dad," added Shorty, Jr.

"Nobody makin' a cent but Tony Pastor."

"I don't care. I'll risk it, and if you will only go along, we can even lay over Tony."

Shorty was thoughtful, and Shanks filled up his glass from the bottle.

"And so far as finding your father is concerned, you will stand just as good a chance while out on the road as you do here in New York. I would like to have you go along devilish well."

"Let's go, dad," said the Kid.

"Only think what fun we used to have when we were traveling."

"But I'm steady now," said Shorty.

"Steady drinker," whispered his son.

"The idea of you're getting steady!"

"Fact. Don't play no rackets any more."

At this both Shanks and the Kid laughed heartily, and Shorty drained his glass.

"Only when yer gets a chance."

"Shorty, say you'll go."

"What kind of a show der yer think ter start?"

"Nigger business—wouldn't you?"

"Nixey. Played."

"Well, what is your idea?"

"Variety. Dat takes der cake."

"It would, if you and the Kid should go. Well, how

would something like this go: 'Shorty's Varieties.' Everybody knows you."

"All but my dad."

"Well, we'll underline on the bills that you are in search of your dad. Maybe that would not only be a card, but if the old rooster is still in the land of the living, it will fetch him out."

"Guess it would. I'll go wid yer, Shankey," said he, after a moment's reflection.

"You will!" exclaimed Shanks, leaping to his feet and overturning the table. "Great graft!"

"Hooray!" yelled the Kid, throwing up his hat and catchin' it on the toe of his boot.

"I will."

"Shake!"

"Dere's my flip," said he, extending his hand, which Shanks caught eagerly.

"Bully boy! Bully for all of us! That takes the cake, Shorty; that does the business. We'll just scoop in the whole country."

"Oh, I guess yes!" said the Kid, strutting up and down the room with his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and his hat tipped forward until it rested on the end of his nose.

"When shall we start?" asked Shanks.

"Right away. I'm tired of loafin'."

"But how about a company?"

"Oh, der's dozens of 'em grubbin' 'round here in New York, good talent, too. I'll fix it."

"Oh, of course. You must be stage manager, just as you used to be."

"Oh, high daddy."

"Ho, daddy."

"How am dat?" sang the Kid, and then he made a break for a little dance.

The little runt was more than delighted. He had always wanted to go into the business again, and had often tried to get Shorty to resort to it again, but he had got tired of it and wanted to loaf awhile and enjoy his money. Now, however, his old love had gotten him once more, and he was ready to resume it.

"Here, put dis in der *Clipper*," said Shorty, writing the following notice:

"WANTED.—First-class variety talent and specialties for the road. The ghost will walk every time. Apply to HORACE WALL, 8 Union Square."

"Good," said Shanks, after he had read it.

"I'll go and see Horace, and tell him what I want, so dat's all right. Yer take this down ter der *Clip*, an' stick it in."

"You bet I will," said Shanks, who was so delighted at the prospect that he could scarcely contain himself, for it was a much better streak of luck than he expected to tumble into.

"Soy," drawled the Kid, facing them with his thumbs still in his vest, and wagging his head.

"Well, what's der matter wid yer?" asked Shorty.

"What's ter be my 'sal,' an' when ders she begin?"

"Yer be hung. Give yer yer grub an' 'spenses, not a cent more," said Shorty, severely. "Yer no good; yer a duff."

"All right; den I'll have what I can steal;" and he walked away with a swagger.

Things being all arranged, Shanks went in one direction and Shorty in another, followed by the delighted Kid.

After informing the dramatic agent what he intended doing, he made arrangements for him to select about a dozen good variety people, male and female, and he would inspect and close bargains with them the following week.

Then he returned to his boarding-house, where he and the Kid began to rehearse their old business which they had so long neglected.

Shorty was seated on the back of a chair with his banjo, while Shorty, Jr., sat in the chair with his tamborine.

Those who received the picture of Shorty and Shorty, Jr., will recognize the situation.

In the next room to the one they occupied at their boarding-house was an old fellow by the name of Squilts, a cross, crabbed old duffer, who was forever quarreling with somebody, and making himself obnoxious to everybody with whom he came in contact.

He had a wooden leg, or rather a patent cork one, with or without which he could not get along very well. And it was on account of this misfortune that Shorty had abstained from bothering him, although he had many times given him ample occasion to do so.

If they laughed or sang he was sure to fly into a passion, and swear loud and long enough to arouse everybody in the house, and when the landlady would attempt to soothe him, he would fire the first thing at her he could lay his hands upon, and demanded that the two Shortys be turned out of the house, or swear that he would leave himself.

He was rich, and paid his way handsomely, or he would never have been kept there so long as he had been, for he had caused many boarders to leave, and rather rejoiced than otherwise that he hadn't a friend in the world.

Squilts was in his room while Shorty and the Kid were rehearsing, and of course he kicked.

And swore.

And rang the bell for the landlady.

And pounded on the wall with his cane.

"Stop that infernal noise in there!" he yelled.

"Go to the devil!" Shorty yelled back again.

"I'll murder you both!"

"Crawl down yerself!" cried the Kid, and they kept right on with their music.

"Stop that noise, or I'll call the police!"

"Call yer grandmother if yer want to."

And again the old fellow pounded on the wall.

By this time the landlady put in an appearance and wanted to know what the trouble was.

"If you don't put those two runts out of your house, I'll leave this very night!" yelled the old man.

"Will yees be aisy, Mither Squilts?" said the woman, soothingly.

"Will you go to the devil, madame?"

"Faith, I'm near enough ter him now, so I am!" replied she.

"Will you put those vagabonds out?"

"Wait till I spake ter 'em."

And she went into Shorty's room.

"Mither Shortness, will yees be aisy for the love of Heaven?"

"I will not," replied Shorty, ripping away on his banjo, while the Kid pounded and rattled his tamborine louder than ever.

"Mither Squilts is onaisy wid yees."

"Tell him ter go shoot himself."

"Troth, he will not."

"Tell him that if he don't clear out dat we will, an' so yer'll lose two instead of one."

"Worra—worra! It's the devil yer rousin' in me house, so ye are," said she, beseechingly.

"I know it. We heard him poundin' on der wall. Fire him out or we'll leave yer shanty."

With another "worra—worra," she trudged back to the old fellow's room, and once more tried to quiet him down. But he threw a bottle of ink at her for her pains, and it caromed on her nose, and made a nigger of her in three shakes of a skunk's tail.

"Och, murther! I'm stabbed—I'm stabbed!" she yelled, and started for down stairs again as fast as ever a person went *who tumbled down*.

"We'll work a racket on dat old duff afore we light out," said Shorty.

"Dat's so. He wants it. Le's go for dat leg dat he pegs wid," suggested the Kid.

This being understood, they went on with their rehearsing, making all the noise they could, while the old fellow went on with his swearing.

But he finally swore himself to sleep in his chair, and allowed Shorty to play away unmolested. At the end of half an hour they began to wonder what had come over him, and whether he hadn't really left the house as he threatened to do.

So Shorty, Jr., stole to the door of his room to see what had happened, and there beheld the old fellow asleep in his chair, with a bottle of brandy nearly emptied on the table near him.

Shorty was informed of how matters stood, and took a survey of the situation.

Securing a long, strong cord, he proceeded cautiously to fasten one end of it around the boot of his cork leg as it lay in the chair in front of him, and then, with considerable difficulty, he managed to throw the other over the chandelier, nearly over the old fellow's head, the leg being unstrapped to give the stump a rest.

Another thing that Squilts owned, and which was almost as much of a nuisance as he was himself, was a big, lazy, yellow dog, who was always asleep somewhere in his room, and nothing less than a kick would ever move him.

On this occasion the dog lay asleep six or eight feet away from his master, and quite near to the door leading to the entry.

Shorty tied the other end of the cord to the dog's hindleg, and he was so lazy that he barely opened one eye to see what was going on, and finding that he was not liable to be disturbed, he flopped his tail once or twice, and then went to sleep again.

When everything was in readiness, the two racketeers returned to their own room again to perfect their arrangements.

Then taking the instruments they stole softly into Squilts' room once more. The Kid took his place near the dog, with Shorty a little further away.

When all was ready they struck up a rattling jig as a sort of a serenade.

The old fellow awoke with a start, and even the dog looked up stupidly.

For an instant he seemed unable to comprehend the matter, but he soon beheld his little tormentors, an' seizing his cane, he yelled:

"Get out of here, you infernal rascals; get out or I'll knock your heads off!"

"Take it cool, daddy," said Shorty.

"Take thunder!"

"We're slaminadin' yer, ole man," said Shorty, Jr., and they both laughed loudly.

"I'll slam you, you—"

He made a move to get upon his feet, when Shorty, Jr., gave the old dog a terrific kick, causing him to yell and spring for the door.

This movement pulled off his master's cork leg, and drew it up high above his head.

The dog was obliged to stop, and Squilts fell sprawling and cursing upon the floor, utterly dumfounded at seeing his leg in the air.

"Whoa, Emma!" yelled the Kid.

"Good-by, ole man!" laughed Shorty, as they suddenly stopped their music and fled from the room amid a perfect shower of oaths.

They left the house, not caring to remain for fear of what might happen, and they laughed over the racket as they ate their supper at a saloon.

As for the dog, he was so frightened that he kept pulling and kicking, thus keeping the leg bobbing up and down near the chandelier.

It was thus dangling and bobbing when the landlady rushed into the room to see what all the uproar meant; as she did not know about her boarder having a false leg, she naturally yelled bloody murder at seeing it in such a position, and ran down stairs for help.

This, of course, exasperated the old fellow more than ever, and after expending nearly all of his

breath in yelling after the landlady, he turned his attention to the dog, and tried to call him back.

But that animal was too thoroughly frightened to be either coaxed or commanded, and so he continued to stand there in the entry outside of the room, and howl and kick.

The landlady succeeded in getting three or four of her boarders to go up stairs, after telling them that Mr. Squilts' leg was dancing the devil's hornpipe on the chandelier.

But when they arrived there they quickly comprehended the situation, released the leg and assisted the owner to get into his chair.

But they couldn't stay in the room long after that, for Squilts made it actually sulphurous with his swearing, and soon had the satisfaction of being left alone.

His only immediate remedy was to abuse the poor old dog, already half frightened to death, but he took an oath on a big dictionary, mistaking it for a bible, that he would spoil every carpet in the house with the gore of his tormentors.

But he didn't get a chance to do it that night, for Shorty concluded that it would be rather too warm for comfort there, and so they went to a hotel for lodgings.

The next day they stole in, packed their traps, paid their bills, and left word for the landlady to deliver their trunks to an expressman.

And glad enough she was to get rid of them, for ever since they had been in the house they had been continually up to some racket or other; and so there were no tears of regret shed, save by Squilts, who still sought for their gore.

Shorty wanted to be nearer business, anyhow, now that he had business to attend to, and so they took up their abode at the Union Place Hotel to stay there until ready to start off on the road.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was now time to hear from Horace Wall, the dramatic agent, who had engaged to procure a troupe of variety artists for Shorty; and so he made arrangements to have such as he did not know come into his room at the Union Place Hotel, and "show up," that is, show their merits.

Those whom he did not know in the business were about ten to one of those whom he did know, and while Shanks went on attending to outside matters, Shorty proceeded to organize his troupe.

The hour appointed was ten o'clock, and both Shorty and the Kid were on hand to take it all in, and see how much it weighed.

About fifty candidates for glory presented themselves at the hotel, and asked to be shown to Shorty's parlors; but the porter had been "staked," and worked the business straight, taking up only one or two at a time, leaving the other below stairs.

The first one to present himself and be shown up was a big, strapping fellow, who wished to take the stage name of the "Great Diabolique," whose pantomime and devil-dance was to take the cake.

Shorty looked up at him, and he looked down at Shorty.

"Are you Mr. Shorty?" he asked.

"Yes, Lengthy; I's Mr. Shorty."

"I'm glad to meet you. Heard a great deal about you, and thought I'd like to join your company."

"What's yer biz?"

"Pantomime and devil-dance."

"Devilish good idea. Peel and show up."

"But I must have music."

"Juke Alfonso, bring hither my untamed harpsichord," said Shorty, addressing the Kid.

"Great Mogul, I skip," and the little runt vanished from the room.

"What's yer name, front an' back?"

"Jabez Brown."

"An yer wants ter be called der 'Great 'Merican Diabolique,' hey?"

"Yes, I think that would take."

"Waal, in der fust place, we'll see see whether yer work takes. What, ho! Alfonso!"

"I'm here, great Mogul," said the Kid, entering the room with Shorty's banjo.

The candidate for notoriety looked at it in surprise.

"Only a banjo?"

"What der yer want—a brass band?"

"But I want time."

"All right; I'll soon see how much time I'll give yer. What der yer want?"

"Give me the 'Devil's Hornpipe.'"

"Well, where's yer togs?"

"I've got 'em on."

"Show up."

"All right," and the candidate proceeded to peel off his outer garments, and presently stood in a pair of black tights, which enveloped his whole figure, and he looked like the very devil.

"Good make-up," said Shorty, after looking him over for a moment. "Now shake," he added, striking up the "Devil's Hornpipe" on his banjo.

The candidate began to fling himself through one of the most wonderful strings of gymnastics ever seen by mortal man. It was wonderful, because it was such a base imitation of the Kiralfys, and was so base generally.

The fellow was flinging his "Saratogas" around in the most reckless manner, endangering the windows, mirror, and furniture, and his reputation as a performer.

Shorty watched him a moment, first with a look of surprise, and then with contempt. Then suddenly stopping the music, he called out:

"Halloo! O'Calligan McGuffin! Come hither."

The performer watched him inquiringly.

"How's that, boss?"

"I'll show yer as soon as McGuffin comes in," said Shorty, and just at that moment the big, closely cropped Irishman made his appearance.

"Here I am, sur," remarked McGuffin.

"Do yer hate der devil?" asked Shorty.

"Faix, I do."

"Well, here's a devilish bad performer. Fire him out."

"One!" yelled the Kid.

"Two!" cried Shorty.

"Bounce!" added McGuffin, and at the same time seizing the astonished "devil" by the tail and nape of the neck and rushing him from the room.

The fellow yelled, but that did him no good, unless he had wind on his stomach, for McGuffin knew his business, and was strong enough to do it!

The Shortys laughed loud and long.

"Next!" shouted the Kid, whereat a couple of young fellows, dressed in clogs and knee breeches, pranced into the room.

"Here we are," said one of them.

"High kickers?" asked Shorty.

"Song an' dance."

"What'll yer have?"

"Sweet Forget-Me-Not."

"Take a piece of it," and Shorty started it on his banjo.

The young fellows soon proved that they were no slouches, either as singers or dancers, and Shorty watched them with much interest.

"How much yer cacklin' for?" asked Shorty, stopping his playing.

"Fifty an' expenses."

"Good 'nough; I'll take a hack at yer if yer keep up yer biz that way. Ready in a week?"

"All right. Here's what they call us," said one of them, handing him a card, on which was written;

"WATSON & ELLIS,
"Song and Dance Artists."

"Good 'nough. Ta-ta," and Shorty bowed them from the room.

The next to be admitted were a pair of very nobby young men, who wished to sing themselves into public favor, and first of all to astonish the little gentleman who had advertised for a company of artists.

"What's yer racket?" demanded Shorty.

"Our what?" asked one of them.

"Yer biz."

"We don't understand you, sir."

"Don't understand me! Well, der yer understand yer git up an' git?"

"We—we don't exactly comprehend you, sir. We saw your advertisement in the *Clipper* for musical talent, and have presented ourselves to let you see what we can do."

"Dat's all hunk. What der yer do, anyway?"

"We are sentimental warblers."

"What?"

"We sing sentimental ballads."

"Oh, dat's yer chow-chow, eh? Well, open yer little warblin' boxes."

"Our what?"

"Yer hash-snappers."

"We're—that is—"

"Oh, shout; warble; confound it, sing!" roared Shorty, whereat the candidates for musical reputation glared at each other, and the Kid grinned all over himself.

"Oh, you would like to hear what we can do," said one of them, taking a tumble.

"Now yer cackle. I want ter sample yer."

"Very well," and they each went for a roll of music which they carried.

Shorty and the Kid watched them with considerable interest, concluding that if they knew no more about stage singing than they did about stage terms, that they were better adapted for driving a four-wheeled stage than for treading the boards of the other kind, as artists.

Finally they selected a ballad, cleared their whistles, and began "Lottie Lee."

Shorty and the Kid started back, exchanged glances, and looked around for weapons.

"Merry, warbling birds,
Joyous, happy birds,
Oh, how sweet your songs to me——"

they began, on the chorus.

They might have finished it; their thin, squeaky voices might have succeeded in getting the best of the song, chorus and all, had not the two Shortys got the best of them.

Shorty, Sr., seized his banjo by the neck, and gave it a preliminary swing or two around his head, while Shorty, Jr., picked up a big pin.

Before they had a chance to finish "Those Merry Warbling Birds," that banjo had raised one of them off his feet, and the pin caused the other to leap into the air about a yard.

"Oh! owl ough!" from the surprised warblers, put a sudden and exclamatory finish to the song.

"One!" cried the Kid.

"Two!" responded Shorty.

"Three—bounce!" yelled McGuffin, bursting into the room, and rushing the astonished singers out of the opposite door.

A sound of tumbling down stairs, mingled with yells and curses, finished the performance.

"Dat peppers der chowder for 'em," said Shorty, while the mischievous Kid roared with laughter.

"Do yez want any more?" asked McGuffin.

"Don't want any more warblin' birds, let's we have 'em on toast. Guffy, waltz in der next fakir," replied Shorty.

"Troth, but she sames a dacent girl, sur," replied McGuffin, scratching his head.

"Waltz her in."

"I will, sur," and as good as his word, he went

from the room, and presently came back again, whirling an astonished young lady in something like a waltz.

This tickled the Shortys quite as much as it astonished the candidate for honors.

"Oh, sir, I——" she exclaimed.

"Shure, she's waltzed. Mr. Shortness," said McGuffin, turning her over to Shorty.

"Yer no duff, Guffy," said Shorty, laughing.

"Troth, I did as ye bid me."

"All right. What's yer biz, ma'am?" he asked, turning to the young lady.

"I'm a tragedy queen, sir," said she, striking a terrific attitude, showing that she had plenty of cheek, if she had no talent.

"Don't want no tragedy. Four queens wouldn't win wid my show," said Shorty.

"But you advertised for talent."

"Dat's what I'm rakin' 'round for."

"Very well. I am considered one of the most talented females in the profession," said she.

"But I don't want dat sort of talent."

"Yes, you do. Allow me to show you a specimen of what I can do—let me give you a little *Lady Macbeth*."

And in spite of all his protestations, she threw herself into a ferocious attitude, and began to spout.

"Out—out, damned spot!" she hissed.

"Yes, out wid her!" cried Shorty, and before she could finish her speech, McGuffin had seized and rushed her out of the room.

But she pulled his hair and scratched his face when he got her out into the hallway, evidently making her mark on him, if she did not succeed in making it upon the stage.

Then came a juggler and a contortionist, both of whom showed good points and were engaged, the contortionist being especially good, and one who is now known the land over as "The Rubber Man."

So after bouncing three or four, Shorty managed to select what talent he wanted in addition to what he had already engaged, after which he proceeded to write out his show bills, in order that Shanks might get them printed. This is a sample of the bill he fixed up:

SHORTY'S VARIETIES.

Shorty & Shanks, Proprietors.

LOOK AT THE ARRAY OF TALENT.

The great, the original, the only

SHORTY,

In his renowned specialties

A chip of the old block,

SHORTY, JR.,

In his acts and doings.

The great sensational, comical, conversational, and saltatorial Ethiopian artists,

WATSON AND ELLIS.

The great ventriloquist and imitator.

HARRY KENNEDY.

The queen of song and beauty, the famed

ELLA MAYO,

The serio-comic star.

KELLY AND RYAN,

The well-known Irish comedians, will delight with some of their superb delineations.

BILLY ARLINGTON,

The celebrated lightning change artist.

THE GREAT RUBBER MAN,

The most wonderful contortionist living

BILLY BARRY,

the boss of all the black men, the Napoleon of fun-makers, will shake out his wrinkles every night for the delectation of his many admirers.

N.B.—Come with a few pins about you, for you are liable to lose your buttons.

MISS FLORA MOORE,

The charming Irish comedienne and comic delineator.

The Boss Dutchman,

GUS WILLIAMS,

in his newest songs, sayings and "chestnuts," will greet his numerous friends at every performance, and try to take the cake.

SHORTY AND THE KID,

in their renowned acts and specialties, will be seen at every performance.

COME AND SEE THE GANG!

Three hours of fun in them every time.

A combination of twenty first-class artists.

Admission reasonable, but various.

N.B.—P.S.—SHORTY IS IN SEARCH OF HIS DAD. Anybody having a suspicion that they may be his father, will please apply at the box office for further particulars and examination.

With this programme they started out on the road, their first stopping-place being Newark, New

Jersey, where they had been extensively billed to give a show at the Opera House.

Shorty never felt better in his life than when he found himself once more on the road and at the head of a first-class company, nearly every one of whom was well known to the amusement-going public.

Shanks was kept as busy as the devil in a gale of wind, for everything was new and not in working order just yet, but Shorty and the rest of the gang had nothing to do but work up what fun and adventure they could find.

Harry Kennedy was a great favorite with Shorty, as he was with the public, and as a natural consequence they were very much together.

Harry is a great joker, and nothing pleases him more than a racket of some sort or other wherein his ventriloquial powers are brought into play.

That afternoon he and Shorty went out for a walk on Broad street to see what they could find lying around loose.

Not finding much they entered a lager beer saloon for the purpose of moistening.

"Swi foamy!" shouted Shorty.

"Pot vas dot?" asked the Dutchman, slightly puzzled over the order.

"Beer—beer!" said Kennedy.

"Oh, dot is beer two dimes," said he, laughing, and without further ado he proceeded to draw the beer and place it on a table before them.

"How yer vas, old sourkrout?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, puddy goot."

"Making money?"

"Nix. Pusiness ish tam pad," said he.

"What a lie," some one seemed to say, just behind him, but of course it was Harry Kennedy.

"Vot vas dot?" exclaimed the Dutchman, whirling around, indignantly.

"Somebody's chirpin'," said Shorty.

"Who say dot I vos a lie?"

"Somebody behind the bar, I guess," suggested Harry, looking serious.

"By jinks, I fin' me dot son of a gun," said he, seizing a bung-starter, and rushing around behind the bar.

But of course he found nothing strange there, and looked up very much astonished.

"Find him?"

"Py donder, dot vas funny," said he, coming out from behind the bar.

"What was it yer said 'bout bliz?"

"I vos say dot it vas tarn pad."

"So's yer beer," sounded behind the bar again, whereat both Shorty and the joking ventriloquist laughed heartily.

As for the astonished and bewildered Dutchman, he turned towards the bar with a look of astonishment.

Then he went around behind the bar, and took a more careful view, and he examined every nook and corner in the room.

"Did you collar him?" asked Shorty.

"Dot vos der queerest dings dot ever vos in my life. Vore vos dot gun of a son?"

"And so your beer is bad, is it?" asked Harry.

"Dot vos von tam lie all der vile. Dot vos der pest peer in Niark."

"Another lie!" said the voice.

"Come out here und I will told you apoud dot," he yelled, being now thoroughly enraged. "Come out here, und I knock mine heat again' your fist, puddy gwick, I bade you."

"No, you won't!"

"I bade you fife tollar dot I will."

"You're a fraud!"

"I was no dings like dot."

"And sell stale beer."

"Mine Gott in Himmel, dot vas too much of a goot ding dot I don't like, und I make him schwaller it down his gullet."

This time he tore around behind his bar, and began kicking and breaking everything he could find, so mad was he, while Shorty and Harry laughed a whole bellyful.

A moment after another Dutchman came into the place, and ordered a glass of beer.

He sat at a table next to our friends.

"Mine Gott, but dot was queer!" said the bewildered Dutchman.

"Wie gehts, mein herr!" said the new-comer.

"Goot. How you vas all der vile?" asked the bar-keeper of the saloon.

"Ein lager."

The foamy was soon brought.

"Bad beer!" said a voice.

"Vot vas dot?" asked the landlord, turning suddenly around upon the new-comer, from whose vicinity the exclamation seemed to come.

"I say me 'oddings, eh?" said the man.

"Who vos dot gun of a son dot say me all dem funny dings?"

"What's der matter mit you?"

"Dat ish all right. You ish your nut off, I guess, puddy soon."

"I bade you nod," said the saloon-keeper, going up to him and smacking his fists together.

"I dakes me no lip; you hear dot?"

"I bade you ten tollar dot you vas a snide."

"I gif you dot den tollar, und I bade you dot you vas anoder."

By this time the two Dutchmen had got their coats off, and were ready to settle things.

Shorty had all the while enjoyed the racket, and now he came to the front, urging them to settle the affair and have done with it.

The result was a grand fight between the two men, during which Harry and Shorty stepped out, leaving several rounds to be paid for by the "remainders."

A policeman waked himself up to a point of bravery, and rushed in to see what it was all about, and

while he was trying to argue the case with his club, our friends got safely out of the way and made for the Opera House, so as to be in time to work the thing according to programme.

How long the two Dutchmen fought they never knew, but they were both on the floor, rolling and kicking around, biting each other, and doing some heavy swearing in broken English, when the policeman rushed in and collared all hands off to the station-house.

Well, on arriving at the Opera House, they found that it was chuck full, as were several members of the company engaged to work the show.

But it so happened that those who were 'full' were older members of the profession, and those who were used to the business, both off and on the stage, and so it did not mar the performance in the least."

Shorty came on in his old specialties, such as the monkey business with the banjo, and a perfect hurrah greeted and attended him from his first entrance to his exit after three encores.

It was an ovation worthy of the "card," and flattering to any man, and when at last a speech was called for Shorty spread himself, and kept the audience in a roar for at least ten minutes, the ending of which was three cheers and a tiger for Shorty, from the boys in the gallery.

Then came Shorty, Jr., as the chip of the old block, and the cheers which greeted the little runt were second only to those which greeted the "old man."

The wind up was a banjo solo by Shorty, accompanied by the Kid on a tamborine, and their old funny business took the cake, as it had done on many former occasions.

A better send off no company ever had, and when the house was counted up, Shanks almost stood on his ear, so bright did the prospect seem for the future.

But the line at the bottom of the bill about Shorty being in search of his dad caught every eye, and while the majority regarded it as a "kid," there was one man in Newark who felt disposed to investigate the matter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE first night of the "Shorty Varieties," at Newark, N. J., was a great success, as shown in the last chapter, but the business of Shorty being in search of his dad created quite as much fun as anything else that people read on the bill.

As before stated, there was a certain little old man who witnessed the performance, and Shorty in his specialties, who took more than a passing interest in him.

He applied to the box-office after the show, and Shanks being there, took in the racket.

"Who is this person who calls himself 'Shorty'?" he asked.

"Well, sir, he would pay handsomely to find out who he is himself," replied Shanks.

"I see the bottom line on the programme says that he is in search of his dad—his father, I suppose. Might I be pardoned for manifesting interest in the matter, if I tell you that I lost a boy several years ago, and somehow think he may be the one?"

"How many years ago?"

"About thirty."

"Well, there is a lean possibility that he is the one, but I have my doubts. Where did you lose your boy?"

"In New York."

"How old was he at the time?"

"About five; and he was somewhat odd-shapen and dwarfed."

"Well, that is coming pretty near to it," said Shanks, reflectively.

"May I have the privilege of seeing him?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

"Where is he now?"

"In his room, I dare say. Wait a moment and I will go up to the hotel with you."

"Thank you, sir," and the stranger turned away to wait until Shanks was ready.

"Wonder if he is his father?" he mused. "It would be devilish funny if it should turn out so."

In the course of ten minutes Shanks finished his business in the box-office, and started for the hotel in company with the stranger.

Arriving there they found Shorty, the Kid, Harry Kennedy and Gus Williams, in the bar-room, drinking Saratoga water on the success of the show, and Shanks at once introduced Mr. Smith (that was the stranger's name) to him, with the announcement that he believed himself to be Shorty's father.

Shorty stepped backward a few feet, and took a good look at him without speaking a word.

"Nixy. Got no wart on his bugle," said he, at length, at which they all laughed.

"What do you mean?" asked Smith.

"I'm looking for my dad, but he has got a big wart on his bugle."

"You mean his nose, I presume?"

"Now yer whistle," said Shorty, nodding.

"Well, wait a moment. I once had a wart on my nose, and had it removed," said the man.

"He's gettin' yer on a string," said the Kid.

"With a nose on the end of it," added Gus Williams.

"Dat's no news for me."

"But wart's he driving at?"

"Goodness nose."

"Wart's the difference?"

"Well, one's wart's is, an' de oder wart's ain't."

This bandying of puns somewhat astonished the old party by the name of Smith, either because they were bad, or because he wasn't used to such a gang as now confronted him.

"I feel almost certain that you are my son," said he, at the first lull of of the commotion.

"You do?"

"Yes, almost certain of it."

"Ah, what be yer givin' me, ole man?" said Shorty, turning away.

"This is sort of reversing matters somewhat," suggested Shanks. "The 'dad' is looking for Shorty, instead of Shorty's looking for his dad."

"See if he can dance; if he can that'll be one symptom," said Gus.

"See if he can walk on his hands, heels up, or turn a double flip-flap," suggested Kennedy.

"Let's see if he can walk off on his ear," said Shorty, Jr., which caused the old gent to look at him.

"Are there two of you?"

"Well, we aren't one."

"Is this the little fellow you call Shorty, Jr.?"

"I'm der Kid; but yer can't play any daddy biz on me."

"Your son?" he asked, addressing Shorty.

"Dey swore him onto me somehow."

"Well, I guess there's no doubt about it. But I'm in earnest about this matter. About thirty years ago I lost a child in New York, possessing many of your physical peculiarities. He was then about five years of age, and I have not seen or heard of him since. How old are you?"

"Give it up."

"Well, I should say that you are about thirty-five, and that would make it."

"And your name is Smith?" asked Shorty, contemptuously.

"Yes; John Smith, and I have always lived in Newark."

"I won't have it! 'Shorty' 'll do for me, if I can't find anythin' better'n Smith."

"But that's a very fine name."

"Old French name," suggested Shanks.

"Seems to me I've heard that name before somewhere," said Gus Williams, who is a great guy.

"I knowed a coon by dat name once," said the Kid.

"Oh, that was a black Smith."

"What are your earliest recollections, please?" asked the old gent, without taking much notice of the chaffing that was going on.

To tell the truth, there was an air of sincerity and honesty about the old fellow that commanded a certain amount of respect, even from the wags who gathered around him.

"Ball us off, an' I'll tell yer," said Shorty.

"Do what?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Set 'em up."

"I don't understand you."

"Shout," said the Kid.

"Shout?"

"Blow us off."

"Say turkey," put in Gus.

"He won't play fowl with us."

"We don't know feather he will or not."

"Oh, yer stuffin'," said Shorty.

"This subject is becoming very *gravy*," said Gus.

"True, but he has a *bone* to pick with him."

"I thought he wanted to take him under his wing."

"There's a *leg*-I-see connected with it."

"Which it is Shanks," put in Kennedy.

"Gentlemen, I do not understand you," said Smith, looking from one to the other.

"Oh, blow off der gang; what's der matter wid yer?" said Shorty.

"Blow you off?"

"Nip der budge."

"Set up the rosy."

"Gentlemen, if you will be good enough to explain—"

"Oh, treat! Can't you tumble?" said the barkeeper, who stood ready and waiting.

"Oh," grunted Smith, looking confused. "I—I never drink myself, and—"

"Dat settles it. Yer no dad of mine," and Shorty turned contemptuously away, while the others indulged in a hearty laugh.

"You will excuse me, but I am a member of a temperance organization and cannot drink."

"Nobody asked you to drink. Fire a 'ball' into the boys, that's all you want to do," said the barkeeper.

"Well, I—"

"I'll take some of der same," said Shorty, and instantly all hands ordered their drinks or segars.

The would-be daddy was in for it, and with no chance of backing out.

"Well, now, tell me what your earliest recollections are," said he, after the round had been paid for.

"Well, boss, der fust thing dat I can remember is bein' taken in," said Shorty.

"Taken in? In where?"

"Into an almshouse."

"You don't say so!"

"Fact; but I graduated from dat college in 'bout five years an' struck New York."

"Is it possible?"

"Yer bet! Did yer ever go gunnin' for dat lost kid of yours?"

"Gunning? What do you mean?"

"Ever try ter find him?"

"Often. In fact, I never ceased searching for him," replied Smith.

"Did yer ever go ter Coram, down on Long Island, shootin' arter him?"

"Yes."

Shorty started and looked surprised.

"How long ago?"

"Well, about ten years ago, I guess."

Shorty looked even more serious at this.

"Who did yer see there?"

"An old man and woman."

"What did they tell yer?"

"They couldn't tell me anything that I wanted to know, and that has been my luck all through."

"I always thought that Shorty was the original Charley Ross," said Gus Williams.

But Shorty was too much occupied with his thoughts to notice the remark.

"Why do you ask these questions?" said Smith.

"Ah, jis' for fun."

"What is your own opinion?"

"My 'pinion is dat yer don't kersactly fill der bill," said Shorty.

"Have you ever made any attempt to find your parents?"

"Has he!" said the Kid, laughing loudly.

"Have you succeeded?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"In gettin' lots of trimmin's but no meat," replied Shorty, with a grin.

"Do you feel any yearnings toward this man?" asked Gus Williams.

"Nary yearn."

"How do you feel toward Shorty?" he asked, addressing Mr. Smith.

"Well, sir, I feel that he is my son."

"An' I feels like havin' a 'ball,'" said the Kid.

"Oh, yer allus yearnin' for 'balls,'" growled Shorty.

"And you have the family resemblance, very strongly defined," continued Smith.

"Guess not bad. Any of 'em in der show biz?"

"No, I am speaking of your features."

"Your handsome features, George!" said Kennedy, imitating the voice of a woman so nicely that the yearning father started and looked around.

"But I will not push my inquiries any further tonight. Sleep on it and I will see you again some time to-morrow."

"All right," replied Shorty.

"What hour will be convenient for you?"

"Say one o'clock."

"Very well, I will meet you here," said Smith, offering his hand.

Shorty shook hands with him, for in spite of the natural devilry in him, he felt just a trifle serious over the affair, for Smith had hit so very near to the mark, that it might, after all, be possible that he was in reality his father.

"Good-by, grandpop," said Shorty, Jr.

"Good-night, my son," said Smith, taking him by the hand.

"Ta-ta! Be good ter yerself, grandpop. Don't stay out late and get inter fast company."

The old man laughed and took his leave.

"What a racket," said Shanks.

"Well, now, I ain't so sure 'bout dat. He makes a pretty good showin' fer der cake. He comes mighty close to der facts," said Shorty, soberly.

"Oh, he's giving you taff," said the barkeeper.

"Do you know him?" asked Shanks.

"Do I know him! Of course I do. He's a first-class beat."

This produced a roar.

"What about him?"

"He's a beat."

They all laughed but Shorty.

"Then he is not a rich and long lost daddy?"

"Not much. He has lived on his cheek and his wits for the past ten years to my certain knowledge."

"That's a symptom," said Shanks, laughing.

"Guess you've found your dad, Shorty."

"Oh, you be hanged. But, I say, what's his little circus wid me, I wonder?"

"Why, don't you see it? If he can play it on you that he is your father, he'll have a soft thing for a dead head soak the rest of his life. If he thought you was as poor as he is, do you suppose he would have tried to work the racket? Not much. He has found out something about your history and is now trying to make a point."

Shorty felt sick, and the more his friends laughed, the sicker he grew.

"Set 'em up, landlord! Best in der house, I go plum down. Ring der bell for yer soup, boys," said he, turning to the laughing gang.

It was a scald and he felt it bad.

"Oh, jus' wait! Wait till he comes here to see me ter-morrer. If I don't make him sick, I'll 'lopt him for my dad."

What the barkeeper had said was strictly true, for this man Smith was known as one of the most plausible old beats in the world, and he could almost make a person believe that the moon was only a big cheese.

So Shorty went to bed to dream over the matter and study up some way of getting even with the old fraud. They were going to play in Newark two nights more, and so he would have all the time he wanted to work a racket on him.

The gang had a good laugh over the adventure, but punctually at one o'clock the next day, Smith made his appearance at the hotel and inquired for Shorty.

This part of the business had been arranged for and he was sent up to Gus Williams' room.

"Halloo, Mr. Smith! Want to see Shorty, I suppose," said Gus, briskly.

"Yes, I wish to see my son."

"All right; you'll find him in Room No. 20, up on the next floor," said Gus, pointing to the stairs.

"Thank you," said he, and up he started, but as he was rather fat this was no joke.

Arriving at No. 20, Harry Kennedy opened the door in response to his rap.

"Ah! wish to see Shorty, I suppose?"

"Yes. Is he in?"

"Just this moment left. You will find him up one flight of stairs—room No. 41. Told me to send you right up."

"Thank you;" and up started Smith, by this time short of wind, and red in the face.

Nearly blowed, he finally reached No. 41, and rapped on the door.

Shanks showed up.

"Ah, is—is—" he began.

"Shorty you want. He was in here only a few moments ago, but he has gone up stairs to his son's room to practice. Wants you to come right up."

The old fellow cast his eyes toward the stairs, and hove a groan.

"No. 52, at the further end of the hall."

"Thanks;" and once more he started.

Reaching the next floor, he went limping and puffing around in search of room 52, and finding it finally, he rapped on the door.

Billy Barry opened it.

"Is—is Mr.—that is—is the person known as—as Shorty here?"

"Shorty! No; he was here a moment ago, but he and the Kid have just gone up stairs," said Billy.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Smith.

"Room 71. You'll find him there. By-the-way, are you a party by the name of Smith?"

"Yes; that is my name."

"That's it. He told me he expected you, and to have me send you right up."

"Gracious! Seems to me that he's a dreadful hard person to find. Guess he don't mind going up and down stairs."

"Oh, no; he likes it. Won't put up at a hotel where there arn't a lot of stairs. Does it for exercise."

"Gracious me!" he groaned, and started up the stairs.

"Good-by, Mr. Smith," said Billy.

Without making a reply, he continued his weary way.

Arriving at No. 71, he rapped on the door, and who should open it but Shorty, Jr.

"Halloo, grandpop! How yer was all der vile?"

"V-very well, but dreadful tired. Whew! I never climbed so many stairs in my life."

"Bully exercise, granddad," said the grinning Kid.

"Yes; but—but it's too much of a good thing. Where is your father?"

"He got tired waitin' for yer. He was 'fraid he wouldn't see yer, an' so he's gone down to der parlor ter find yer."

"Oh, dear! and here I have climbed clear to the top of this house," he moaned.

"Dat's all right. It's good for yer joints."

"Good! Is he down in the parlor?"

"Yes; an' crazy ter see yer. He thinks yer got him dead ter rights; his dad, sure."

"I am glad to hear it. I will go right down and see him;" and the old man, whom the Kid had not asked to sit down and rest himself, started to tramp down stairs again.

"Dat's all right. Ta-ta, granddad," chirped the Kid.

"Good-by, my son," returned the old fraud.

"My —!" muttered the Kid.

It was a long tramp to reach the parlor, although not so hard a one as it was to go to the top of the building, and yet he never tumbled to the racket.

But on arriving at the parlor, he found it empty, with the exception of Gus Williams, who only "happened" to be in there.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you found him yet?"

"No. I was told that he was here," said Smith.

"Was here not two minutes ago, but he got nervous about your coming, and he has just taken a hack to ride to your house."

"Well, I'll wait here until he returns. The fact is, I have been clear to the top of the house in search of him, but at every room I have just missed him by a few minutes," saying which he threw himself upon a sofa to rest.

He waited right there in that room until dark, but Shorty kept out of sight all day long, and when night came he concluded to go to the show, thinking that perhaps something had happened to the runt, as every one of the gang had kept out of sight, and even Gus Williams had left him to go in search of Shorty.

But when he applied at the box-office for a dead-head ticket, he found a stranger there, and failed to "work" him for a cent's worth. So he had to stand outside and warm his heels by knocking them against the sidewalk until the show was out.

Even then he failed to find Shorty, and after waiting around the hotel for an hour or so, Gus Williams assured him that he had been obliged to go to New York on the late train, but would see him the next day.

It was a bitter pill to swallow, but in spite of everything, he never tumbled.

The next day, however, he was at the hotel bright and early, for he had struck too good a thing, he thought, to lose it.

But Shorty had his eyes open all the while, and was arranging another racket for his nibs.

He met him that afternoon and gave him taffy enough to make a pound cake, admitting that he was his father, and asking him to go on the road with him and have a good time.

This, of course, was just what the old beat wanted, and he gladly assented to the proposition.

"I shall only be too happy to accompany my celebrated and long-lost son on his triumphant way," said he, with much enthusiasm.

"Good 'nough, ole man. Come down ter der show ter right an' come on der stage. Der Kid'n me's goin' ter do a new act."

"Oh, I shall only be too happy."

And so it was arranged that the old duffer was to go behind the scenes, where Shorty was to introduce him formally to the company as his dad.

At the appointed hour the old man was there, and was promptly admitted.

Shorty and his traps were in fine working order.

He and the Kid had an act together to close the

performance, and it was this scene that he had arranged to introduce him, as he thought, to the company as his long lost dad.

In the meantime a tackle and fall had been fixed up in the "flies," and three stout men stood ready to work it.

A scene was run on, in front of which Billy Barry was doing some of his funny business for the amusement of the audience, but behind it stood Shorty, Smith, the Kid, and several other members of the combination.

Just before the scene was to be run off, showing the one for Shorty's act, the stage carpenter approached Smith, who was standing near the middle of the stage, and slipping a stout rope around his waist he hooked the tackle into it, and before Smith knew what was going on he was going up.

At that moment the scene was run off and the crowd in front beheld the well-known old beat, John Smith, dangling and yelling about ten feet from the floor, and fastened to his body was a large printed card on which was written:

"This is Shorty's Dad!"

This was an act not down on the bills, and the roar of applause that greeted it was perfectly deafening, nearly everybody recognizing the "suspension."

Shorty and the Kid appeared with banjo and tambourine. A shout greeted them which drowned the cries and curses of the struggling "dad."

And then they began to sing "Up in a Balloon," making references to Smith which brought down the house with terrific roars of laughter and applause, after which a speech was demanded. Shorty at once came to the front.

"Ladies and gemmen, dere's my dad!" said he, pointing to Smith. "He has been tryin' ter get me on a string, but I se got der best of him. How does he hang for smokin'?"

A roar of laughter greeted this, in the midst of which the curtain and the lights went down.

CHAPTER X.

Poor John Smith! They roasted him dreadfully that night in the Newark Opera House.

After the curtain went down, and while the audience were yet cheering and demanded another look at him, the whole company gathered beneath the suspended fraud and guyed him most unmercifully, making him own up to being a bilk, and giving it to him in all sorts of ways; it being their last night there, they were not so particular.

"Lemme down!" he kept yelling.

"Nix. We won't let you down or let up on you either," said Gus Williams, who had laughed himself bloated over the racket.

"Yer a duff," said Shorty, and just then the Kid, Shorty, Jr., who had found a syringe somewhere among the properties, brought it to bear, filled with dirty water, and squirted it at the old beat, hitting him in the face, eyes, ears, hair, etc.

"Oh—oh! be still; I'll have you all arrested," and he sprawled and flopped around in mid-air like a crab on a fish-hook.

"How der yer like bein' my dad, ole man?" asked Shorty.

"I am not your dad, I don't want to be your dad. I wouldn't own you for a son."

"An' yet yer tried ter play it on me, didn't yer? Give him anoder one, Kid."

"No—no! Don't you let him do it."

"Oh, no. I won't do it; of course not," said the mischievous little fellow, squirting about a pint of water in the suspended man's ear.

"How do you like this for a watering-place?" asked Billy Barry, with one of his comical grins.

"Will yer skip out if we'll let yer down?" asked Shorty.

"Yes—yes! Oh, Lord, yes!" he moaned.

Shorty gave a signal to those who held the rope, and down came Smith, sprawling.

"There, dat's der first time yer've taken a drop since I've known yer. Now waltz," said he, pointing to the stage door.

"Yes—yes; where's my hat?"

"Here it is," said Harry Kennedy, placing it on his head, and banging it down over his eyes.

"Oh—oh! lemme out!"

"Go it!"

"But I can't see," said he, struggling to lift the hat up so he could see where he was.

"Feel!"

"Spin out on yer hagle!"

"Go out on all fours!"

"Lay down and roll out!"

"Crawl out!"

"Git out!" said Shorty, and at that moment Smith succeeded in pushing the hat far enough up to see, and he made a bee-line for the door.

"You are a set of ruffians, and—oh!" he suddenly exclaimed, for just as he reached the stage door, Gus Williams, who had stationed himself behind it, let go a terrific, ear-splitting blast upon an old trombone, which frightened the old fellow out of a year's growth.

But he managed to reach the street, and the way he did hoof it toward home was a caution to lame ducks.

"Dat settles his paternal feelin's, I guess," said Shorty. "Guess he won't want ter play daddy wid any oder cove right away."

And Shorty was right. The old fraud was never before taught such a hearty lesson; but the worst of it was, the affair got into the papers, and everybody in Newark was laughing at him. To this day he is called "Shorty's Dad," and probably always will be.

From Newark the company returned to Jersey

City, whose dead walls were already gleaming with the show bills of "Shorty's Varieties," and there two splendid houses rewarded them, after which they opened for a week in Brooklyn at the Academy of Music.

Shanks was more than delighted. Like the others, he was having a heap of fun, and, like Shorty, making a pile of money.

"Pard, how does she look?" asked Shorty, after the first full house in Brooklyn.

"Fine as silk, old man—fine as silk. Didn't I tell you that it would pan out good?"

"Dat's all hunk, but we may strike bad biz; den yer'd drop yer tail feeders!"

"Oh, of course, we can't expect to make money all the time. But we'll have a nice pot salted down against bad business, and I guess we'll pull through all right. Found out anything more about your dad?"

"Nix. Guess I'll have ter die widout havin' my ole man spank me," said Shorty, with a sigh.

"Is that the object of your search?"

"Dat's one object, pard. Der trufe is, I feels bad because I wasn't brought up same's odder fellers is; I never got banged around any by my dad, an' I feel kinder slighted like."

"People bore me to death at the box-office, inquiring what that line on the programme means, where it says that Shorty is looking for his dad."

"Oh, dat's all right, pard. Nothin' like gettin' folks interested," said Shorty, laughing and turning away.

"Yes, that's all right, I suppose," muttered Shanks, "but I'm the man that gets bored."

The reader will call to mind the line which Shorty put at the bottom of the programme, and, of course, it is not to be wondered at that it caused many inquiries.

But that night he had an adventure that was not so pleasant.

It happened in this way:

Among the audience was a middle-aged woman, who, five years before, had lost a little boy about six years of age, it having been stolen from her by some miscreant, and ever since then she had been flighty in her mind.

Ordinarily she was all right and harmless, even if she was "a little off," but whenever anything happened to remind her of her loss, she became for the time being wild and uncontrollable.

She enjoyed the performance for some time, and until after Shorty had done his first act, when her eye caught sight of the bottom line on the programme.

This set her to thinking, and in five minutes she was as crazy as a blinded bed-bug. The idea took possession of her that Shorty was her long-lost boy, and rushing out of the dress circle, where she was sitting, she made her way quickly to the stage door, and demanded to see Shorty, her darling lost boy.

The door-keeper attempted to prevent her from going upon the stage, but she gave him a smack in the snoot that knocked him over a chair, and while he was getting himself together and picking himself up, she made her way in behind the scenes and asked to see Shorty immediately.

Shorty was standing near by all blackened up, just as he had come from the stage, and a healthy "lost son" he looked like, indeed.

"Here I is, ole gal, what's der matter?" he asked.

"Are you Shorty?" she asked, wildly.

"Dat's me, honey," and the company gathered around.

"And you are looking for your parents?"

"Dat's part of der programme."

"Were you stolen?"

"Give it up."

"About five years ago?"

"Waal, not dat I recermember," said he, laughing.

"Do you remember your parents?"

"Waal, not very distinctly, never havin' seen 'em."

"Ah! my heart yearns!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms about her head.

"No! Got it bad?"

"For you!" and she rushed towards him with open arms and in a most tragic manner.

"No. Yer givin' me rock candy," said Shorty, dodging behind Billy to avoid her.

"Yes, you are my long-lost Billy."

"No, that's him," said he, pushing Billy Barry toward her, for he now saw that she was "off her nut."

"No—no; go lightly on me, old lady, for I have got a full set of parents, all living and healthy," said Billy.

"Come to my arms, my long-lost Billy-boy!" she yelled, and making a dive she caught Shorty up in her arms and covered his black faces with kisses.

"Hold on!" yelled Shorty, kicking and struggling to get away, while the others roared with laughter.

"Oh, my dear—dear boy Billy! Kiss your poor mother!" she said, coaxingly.

"Not much. Lemme go!"

But she would do nothing of the kind, and nearly kissed all the burned cork from his face, at the same time blacking her own, and making herself look too somical for anything.

It was rather a sad affair, but it was comical after all. There she stood hugging Shorty to her bosom, and wildly kissing him in her delirium, while he was struggling with all his might to get away from her.

"Oh, my dear little Billy, how you have grown!"

"I'll make you groan if you don't lemme alone."

"You must come right home with me. Your poor dear father will cry with joy to see you."

"Take her away, somebody," yelled Shorty.

Three or four of those who stood around attempted to separate them, but she clung to him like death to a dead nigger, and during the struggle the whole party fell in a confused heap down stairs.

There, however, the crazy woman was taken in charge by a policeman who had been summoned, and Shorty was once more at liberty.

"Don't let them take you from me, Billy boy; my own Billy boy, don't let them separate us," she pleaded.

"Yer jes' bet I will. Git out; yer off yer cabase. I arn't yer long lost Billy."

"Come right along with me," said the officer.

"No—no, I must have my boy," and she struggled savagely to get away.

"Come along quietly or I shall have to resort to force," and the officer attempted to get her up stairs.

But she broke away from him and again made a dive for Shorty, who, seeing the danger, darted aside, and she caught Billy Barry in her arms and nearly squeezed the breath out of him.

But she was finally got out of the building and taken to the station-house, where, on learning her name and malady, she was escorted home and handed over to the keeping of her friends.

Of course the grand laugh was on Shorty from everybody in the company, and he was about the worst hugged, kissed, and bumped fellow ever seen.

"Waal, dat's one way ter have yer blacknin' taken off," said Shorty, Jr., laughing.

"That's so. It isn't everybody that can have the burned cork kissed off their mugs," added Gus Williams.

"How ther blazes did she get in here, anyway?" growled Shorty, rubbing his bumped head.

The door-keeper told his story, and then a part of the laugh was on him.

But the performance was scarcely interrupted and went on nicely to the end, Shorty and the Kid "taking the cake," as usual, in spite of his mishap.

In their last act Shorty perched himself on the back of a chair, his favorite position while playing on the banjo, with the Kid in the chair, with a pair of bones, and for their last encore he sang:

"I'm a lookin' for my dad,
Baby mine—baby mine;
If I find him I'll be glad,
Baby mine—baby mine;
He lost me years ago,
And I wander to and fro
Wid my bully fust-class show,
Baby mine—baby mine,
Wid my bully fust-class show,
Baby mine."

A tremendous burst of applause greeted the first verse, and this was the second:

"Oh, I long to see his mug,
Baby mine—baby mine,
Be he big or little bug,
Baby mine—baby mine;
He has dodged me long enough,
I'm gettin' in a huff,
For an orphan it is rough,
Baby mine—baby mine,
For an orphan it is rough,
Baby mine."

Even this would not satisfy the audience, and he had to repeat it twice more before they would allow him to retire, or retire themselves.

On the whole the performance had been quite as attractive to the performers as it had been for those in the front of the house, and they all scattered after getting out of their stage togs, to laugh and tell over the curious adventures of the evening.

The next night was a sample of this one, only that the programme was changed, introducing every member of the company in new acts and specialties.

Saturday night had been announced as a benefit night for Shorty, and the boys of Brooklyn were making great preparations for having it a "rouser," and quite a large number of those who had read so much regarding him, and who had found him even better than he had been described, were getting together a subscription for something or other, although they kept it very quiet for fear it might leak out and spoil the surprise they intended it to be.

During the day—Saturday—Shorty had another adventure. It was while the matinee was in progress, and was something like the first one.

An old colored man who had laughed over his antics at two performances, at length discovered the bottom line on the programme, and having lost a boy several years before, resolved to interview Shorty, all the while regarding him as a genuine darkey.

Telling the doorkeeper that Shorty had instructed him to call on him at his dressing-room, he managed to get on the stage and to find the person he was desirous of interviewing, all blacked up for business.

"Am dis yer Shorty?" he asked, stooping forward with both hands on his broomstick cane.

"Yas, chile, dar am whar yer hit it."

"Can I hab a moment's elocution wid you?"

"Ob cose yer can; elocute," said Shorty, imitating his voice nicely.

"Can I seed you alone, chile?"

The old darkey stood in the same attitude, and kept his big white eyes fastened on Shorty.

"Ob cose yer can, honey, if you don't took me so far away dat I can't get back ter biz. What am it?"

"Shorty has found his dad this time for sure," suggested Gus Williams, which created a laugh.

"Come a little bit dis way," suggested the old man, leading him ten or fifteen feet away.

Shorty followed with some curiosity, and three or four members of his company gathered near in the hopes of having some fun.

"Shorty, I hab a strong s'picion dat I am your far-

der," began the old darkey, with both hands on his cane as before.

"Der devil you have!" exclaimed Shorty, starting back, astonished.

"Fo' shuah, honey."

Shorty laughed, in spite of himself, and those who stood around joined in most heartily.

"What makes yer think so, honey?"

"Waal, in de fus' place I lose a boy once. In de secon' place I seed you' advertisement dat you war in search ob you' farder. Now, might I ax how ole you is, chile?"

"A little mor'n eighteen."

"Dat's all right—dat makes it. Now how ole war you when you war los'?"

"Give her up, daddy."

"Bout seben, say?"

"Well, I guess so."

"An' yer neber hearn tell ob yer friend's?"

"Not a mouthful."

"Don't know dere names, I s'pose?"

"Nix; do you?"

"Waal, chile, I hab a strong suspicionment dat you' farder's name am David Jonsing."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Shorty.

"Chile, I's 'fraid dat it am so."

"Waal, who's Dave Jonsing?"

"Behold him!" said the darkey, straightening up and striking his breast.

"What! Why, is this you, Dave?" and Shorty, chuck full of burlesque and fun, sprang forward and caught the old fellow's hand.

"Dat am my name, honey; an' I fink fo' shuah dat I am you' father."

"Honest Injun?" and Shorty looked sober.

"It's putty nigh shuah ob it. Whar you come from?"

"Don't know, Dave. Der fus' I knowd, I war on dis yer Long Island."

"Whar 'bouts?"

"Oh, down here a few miles."

"Den I's shuah ob it!" exclaimed the darkey, opening his arms for an embrace.

He went for Shorty, but Shorty went for safety, having had one hugging adventure, and so dodging out of the way, he allowed the old darkey to catch and hug a stage carpenter who at that moment chanced to come that way while attending to his business.

"What the devil are you doing?" growled the carpenter.

"I begs your pardon, sah, I war jus' gwine ter hug my long-lost boy, Tommy Hanshaw Mayo Ten Eyck Jonsing."

"Go to the devil!" and the carpenter went about his work, leaving Shorty and the gang laughing merrily.

"I don't zactly un'erstan' dis yer," said the darkey, gazing from one to another.

"Oh, dat's all right, Dave. You wait here 'til I do my next turn an' den I'll talk ter yer."

"All right, Tommy, I'll stan' right heah 'til you gets frew, an' den I wants ter hug yer 'bout an hour."

"Waal, we'll see 'bout dat," said Shorty, and away he went with the Kid to do their act.

The old darkey posted himself by the wing near the entrance, and watched the act with great earnestness and parental pride. Finally he got warmed up when Shorty began a dance.

"Oh, look at him!" he exclaimed; "I know dat's my boy. See him knock der putty out ob de cracks in dat flo'! Dat's my Tommy fo' shuah."

It was fun galore for those who stood near him.

But after Shorty had finished his act, he at once sought Mr. Johnson, and asked him to go with him to his dressing-room where he would soon be in shape to talk with him.

Shorty and the Kid dressed together in the same room, and all three of them went there.

"Chile, I should know by your dance dat you was my Tommy," said the old darkey, proudly.

"Is dat so? Waal, take a seat while I wash up," and he pointed him to a chair, while he and the Kid proceeded to the sink to wash themselves.

Everything was new to the old darkey, and he was so intent on looking around that he did not notice the change of complexion which soap and water had produced on his "Tommy," until Shorty had turned around again.

"So you think I's yer son, do yer, Dave?" said he, and he stood wiping his white face and hands.

The old fellow gave one look, started to his feet, stepped back a few paces, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What am dis yer? Am you Shorty?" he demanded.

"Now yer see me clear to der skin. How d'yer like me?"

"An' amn't you a colored pusson after all?"

"Not all der time. Soap an' water gets der best of my cul'dness most ebry time, David. Do I resemble your Tommy now?" he asked, laughing.

"Chile, I's a big, black fool. I thought all der while dat you was a black boy. I really hopes dat you'll 'sense a pco' old fool. I was shuah dat I had foun' my son," and the old man spoke with considerable emotion.

"Dat's all right, Uncle Dave. Didn't know dat I could make up so well. Here, here's a tenner for yer, an' if I can ever be of any 'sistance to yer in findin' yer boy, call on me anywhere," and he gave him a ten dollar bill.

"Oh, Mr. Shorty, don't gib me dis yer money. I's a poo' ole man, but it don't look zactly right fo' me ter take dis yer from a stranger."

"Dat's all right," said the Kid. "Here's another," and putting another ten (which he took out of Shorty's pocket) into the old fellow's hand, he led him toward the door.

"It's so much 'bleged to yer, an' if yer never find you farder, I shall allus know dat you deserved a good one," and the old man hobbled out of the building.

The company had the laugh on Shorty, of course, but he never regretted what he did for the old man, feeling that he was honestly in search of a son, as he was of a father.

That evening, set apart for Shorty's benefit—there was an overflowing house, and one of the noticeable things about it was, that both of the private boxes, nearest to the stage on either side, were filled with well-dressed boys and young fellows who seldom occupy such conspicuous places.

The performance went off with unusual briskness, and was applauded heartily. Shorty, in his educated

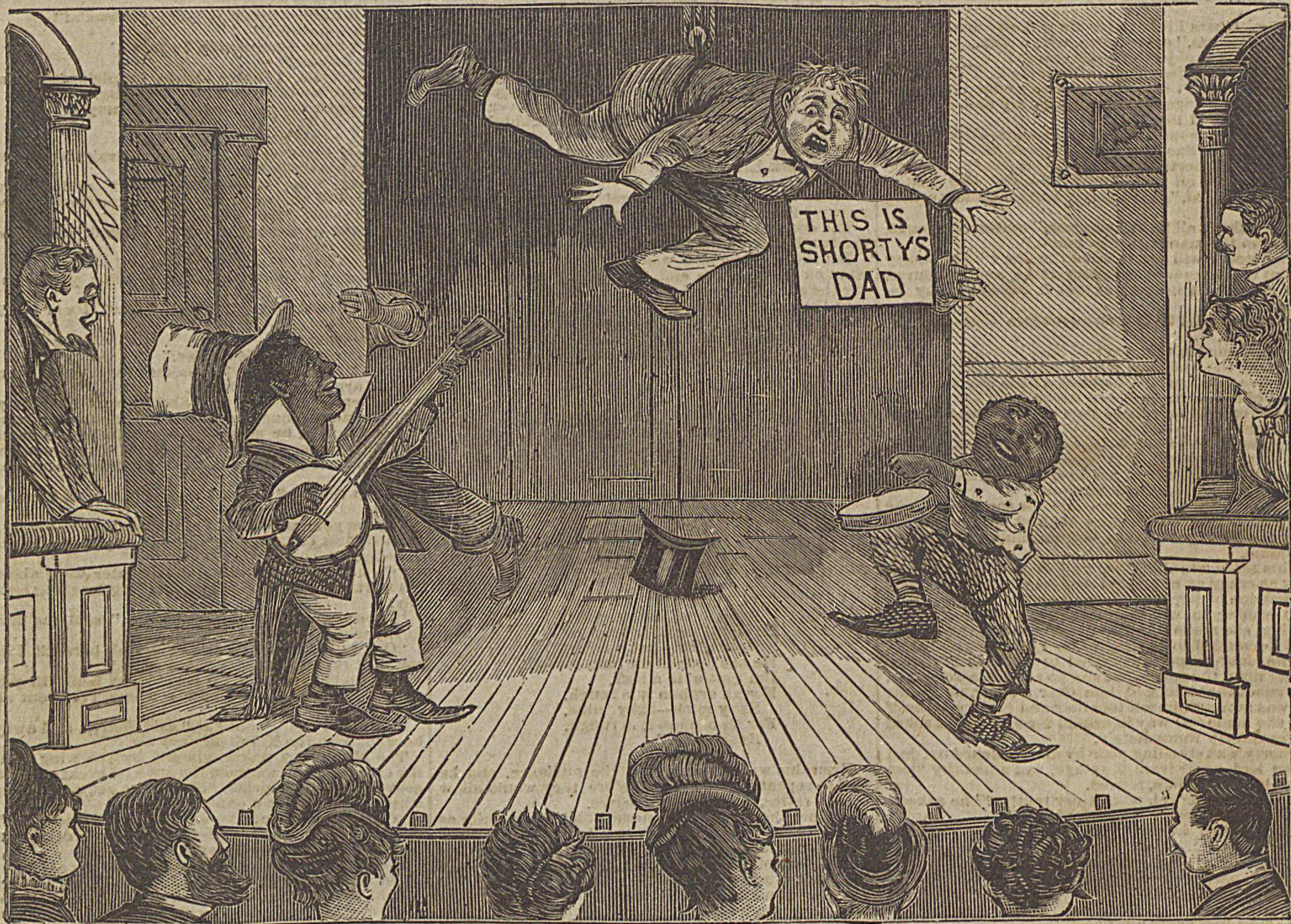
me inter notice." (Three cheers for Peter Pad.) "Dat's good 'nough. I shall allus remember der boys of Brooklyn, an' der ladies an' gentlemen, too, for I's allus found friends here, an' so has der Kid, Shorty, Jr." (Cheers for the "Kid.") "I am now on der road, lookin' for fun an' my dad. I's had two or three afflictions already, but dey didn't fill der bill; but depend on it, if I never find him, I shall allus remember dat I can find friends in Brooklyn. Once more thanking you for your kindness an' yer ticker, allow me ter say good-night."

As they bowed and retired the curtain came down, the orchestra struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and amid cheers and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, the performance came to an end.

arrivals, as a member of the legislature from Scoharie, and after loafing around for a week or more, and seeing no prospect of astonishing the city, he concluded to go back to Albany, and attend to his business.

But he wasn't half or quarter satisfied with his visit, and was going back for the express purpose of framing some sort of a law that would make the city of New York sick because it had taken no notice of him.

On board the steamer, however, he was bound to let people know who and how great a personage he was, and the boat had not proceeded more than ten miles before everybody on board knew that there was a member of the legislature among them, by the name of Kedunk.



The scene was run off and the crowd in front beheld the well-known old beat, John Smith, dangling and yelling about ten feet from the floor.

monkey act, was received with thunders of applause, especially from the private boxes.

As usual, he and Shorty, Jr. finished the performance with banjo and bones, giving songs, dances, imitations, and comic dialogue, with local hits at men and things.

This was also received with roars of applause, and just as it was finished, a fine-looking young man, about eighteen years of age, leaped from the right-hand private box, out upon the stage, holding in his hand a handsome little box.

Instantly everybody knew, of course, that there was to be a presentation of some kind, and the house at once became quiet after bestowing some encouraging applause upon the good-looking young man.

Shorty and Shorty, Jr. stood on either side of the chair they had just been using in their act, and waited events.

The young man approached them, and said:

"Shorty, a few of your friends in Brooklyn, readers of *The Boys of New York*, admirers of you in it as well as upon the stage, have clubbed together for the purpose of presenting you with this watch and chain, trusting that you will wear it, and that it will keep as good time as you do on your banjo."

Here he held up a superb gold watch and chain, and the audience fairly yelled their approval.

It was a genuine surprise, and Shorty was completely taken aback. But taking the present in his hands, he advanced to the footlights amid rounds of applause, and said:

"Boys, yer do me brown; I thank yer from top ter bottom. Yer bet I'll wear it, an' if it ever goes 'up a spout,' yer can guess dat I'm on my last legs. I's glad dat yer like me an' my show, but I's not so fresh as to think dat I don't owe some of my popularity to my ole friend, Peter Pad, who fust brought

CHAPTER XI.

FROM Brooklyn, where they met with so much success, and where Shorty was presented with a beautiful watch and chain by his admirers, the company proceeded to Albany, where their advent had been heralded by newspaper notices and a large display of posters.

Both Shorty and Shanks were in the best of spirits, and everything was going smoothly, although while on his way up the river, the little joker could but remember the rackets he had enjoyed in that old town, and especially the last one, wherein he had been "fired out" of a house, where he had gone with a letter of introduction from his old friend and rival in business, ex-sergeant Polly.

He wondered if he should see the old duffer, Mr. Bundle, whom he had twice tried to claim as his dad, and if he should chance to do so, what would be the result?

The whole company were in fine spirits, and one or two of them had "fine spirits" in them, while on the way up on the steamboat, and everything in the shape of fun was worked to its utmost.

Among the passengers was an old fellow and his wife, who soon attracted notice, as he intended to do, on account of the consequential airs he put on. He was a member of the legislature, and had been down to New York with his wife to show her the big city, and at the same time to show himself to the inhabitants, whom he confidently expected to turn out with music and banners to receive and escort him over the astonished town.

In his estimation, there was but one greater man than he was in the country, and that person was the President of the United States. But somehow, probably on account of their wickedness and indifference to great men, he scarcely excited more attention than a farmer would have done, although one of the evening papers published his name among the hotel

Gus Williams is forever on the lookout for just such fellows, and consequently he was one of the first to take him all in and pipe him off, although the others were not long in tumbling to the "fresh."

Going up to him as he was pacing back and forth in the state-room cabin, watched and admired by his anxious wife, he extended his hand.

"The Honorable Jesse Kedunk, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, I am proud to say that I am known as Honorable Jesse Kedunk, member of assembly from Scoharie, yes, sir," he replied, in a loud tone of voice, and then he looked around to see if the rest of the passengers were standing up to get a look at him.

"I am delighted to know you, having, of course, heard much of you," replied Gus, shaking him warmly by the hand, while the other members of the "gang" gathered around to see what was coming.

"My name is Astor. You have probably heard of me or my father."

"Gracious, yes! You don't tell me that yu are Mr. Astor? Waal, I'm right glad tu shake and know yu, I am, by gracious," and he still held Gus by the hand and looked around to see if his wife and other passengers were looking.

"My dear sir, the pleasure is mutual; I always make it a point to get acquainted with all the distinguished people, especially members of the legislature."

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"Allow me to introduce you to some of the leading citizens of our great city. This is Mr. A. T. Stewart," said he, presenting Shorty.

"Good gracious, yu don't say so," exclaimed Kedunk, looking down at the little runt. "Waal, who'd a thought it? I had an idea that he was a big, tall man."

"Ah! I am done too much," said Shorty, reaching up for his hand. "Shake, ole mau!"

"Of course I will, I'm right glad to see you, Mr. Stewart, I am, I declare."
 "Me too; I always get introduced to all big guns."
 Mr. Kedunk laughed and looked around to note the effect of his ovation.
 "And this is Commodore Vanderbilt," said Gus, presenting Billy Barry. "Hon. Jesse Kedunk."
 "You don't say so! Commodore, I'm right glad to see you," and he nearly shook Billy's arm off.
 "Mr. Kedunk, I'm overpowered."
 "So be it."
 "Heard so much about you, you know."
 "Waal, I suppose I am pretty well known," and again he looked around to note the effect.
 "I hear you are considered a great man up your way?"

pleasure in introducing you to the Honorable Jesse Kedunk, Member of Assembly from Schoharie."
 The Honorable Kedunk bowed very low, for by this time he was very "full," and could put on all the flourishes.
 "Speech—speech!" shouted Shorty and the gang.
 The Honorable Kedunk didn't need much urging at any time, but just now he was positively anxious to air his eloquence, and show them what a great man he was, so he braced up, and began:
 "Fellow citizens—"
 "Hooray—hooray!" yelled the gang.
 "Three cheers for Kedunk!" shouted Shorty; and before he could go any further with his speech, he was obliged to bow to the compliment.
 But in doing so he nearly lost his balance, and

Honorable Jesse Kedunk belongs to one of our first families, besides being a member of the legislature, and I am certain that it must be somebody who is not aware of this fact who presumed to advise him to wipe off his chin. Proceed, Mr. Kedunk," said Gus, looking as sober as an owl.
 "Fellow citizens, when in the course of human events, as my illustrious brother, Daniel Webster, said, there is no mistake about the times in which we live."
 This created a perfect *furor* of enthusiasm, and everybody on board crowded around the speaker.
 "The times want—hic—that is to say, they are shaky in the knees."
 Great cheering.
 "What we want is brains—honest brains."



Bundle sent a terrific kick at him, missing Shorty, but taking his own feet from under him and landing him on his head in a dreadfully demoralized condition.

"Waal, yes, I b'lieve I am. I was 'lected by a large majority," said he, proudly.
 "I should say so."
 "This is John Kelly," said Gus, presenting Harry Kennedy.
 "Mr. Kelly, I've hearn lots 'bout you. I'm right glad to see the boss of Tammany Hall," and he reached out his big hand for Harry.
 "Oh, my dear sir, you cannot be any more delighted at seeing John Kelly than he is at making the acquaintance of the Honorable Jesse Kedunk," said Harry.
 The other members of the "gang" were introduced by various big names, and by this time a large number of the other passengers had tumbled to the racket and were gathered around to see the fun.
 "Will you join us in some refreshments?" asked Gus, after they had all been introduced.
 "Waal, I am not much of a drinking man, but when I'm asked by such distinguished folks I don't see how I can refuse," said he.
 "Jesse, you be careful," said his wife, who had overheard the conversation.
 But he bestowed a look of withering contempt upon her that seemed to make her grow old, after which he followed the fellows down stairs to the bar-room.
 Here they kept up the racket until they had "fired" about a dozen drinks into him, and got him to make nearly as many speeches, which they applauded roundly.
 Then they took him back into the state-room cabin to show him off.
 Taking his arm, Gus Williams led him to where there was quite a group of passengers gathered around the heater, and at once introduced him.
 "Ladies and gentlemen, knowing how it is myself, and believing that you will all be pleased to make the acquaintance of so distinguished a man, I take great

came within an inch of tumbling over, which, of course, brought forth more cheers from the gang.
 His wife, however, became very anxious on his account, knowing his weakness, and she tried to get near enough to warn him that he was in bad company. But as soon as the ovation subsided, he began again.
 "Fellow citizens—"
 Again did they cheer him, and he had to stop for the purpose of acknowledging the compliment, never tumbling to the racket that was being worked on him.
 "Fellow citizens:—I—hic—I am very—hic—much obliged to Mr. Astor for introducing me to your notice—hic!"
 "Hooray—hooray! Three cheers for Kedunk!"
 These calls were vigorously responded to.
 "As I was about to say—"
 "Pull down your vest!" said Harry Kennedy, imitating somebody's voice, and this raised a laugh.
 The half-dazed Kedunk looked around with a frown for the purpose of withering the person, when Shorty again proposed three cheers.
 By this time everybody began to see the fun of the thing, and Mrs. Kedunk became more anxious on account of her distinguished husband.
 "Jesse!" she called, "be careful."
 "Old woman, shut up," said he, and this produced another cheer.
 "Well, fellow citizens, as I—"
 "Get up in a chair!" shouted somebody, and Gus assisted him to stand up in a stuffed chair.
 Here he balanced himself with some difficulty.
 "Fellow citizens—"
 "Wipe off your chin!" Harry Kennedy said, imitating another strange voice in the crowd.
 "Mr. Astor—Mr. Vanderbilt—hic—am I to be insulted in this way?" exclaimed Kedunk, and this produced another laugh.
 "Gentlemen, I trust this will not occur again. The

"Bah!" and Kennedy this time imitated a cat beautifully, and "calves' brains" was so clearly hinted at that everybody saw it.
 "Whither are we drifting, fellow citizens?"
 Just as he propounded this political conundrum, Shorty jerked the chair on which he stood, and down came the Honorable Kedunk, kerchunk, landing on top of his anxious wife, who had by this time managed to get near him.
 A grand shout went up as Kedunk went down, but his wife had no idea of being fallen on and rolled over without putting in a kick or two on her own account; and having become disgusted with her husband, she now went at him tooth and nail, making the liveliest time for him that he had ever enjoyed.
 This created intense excitement among the passengers, while Shorty and the others encouraged them on and offered to bet first on one and then on the other.
 But the captain and two of the stewards put in an appearance just then, and after considerable pulling managed to separate husband and wife.
 "Well, all right, if you won't let us have it out here, I'll take him to our state room and finish him," said she.
 "All right, but you must not disturb people," said the captain.
 "Oh, I'll disturb him, never fear. Here, Jesse Kedunk, you come with me!" and she took him by the ear and led him meekly away.
 He never said a word, evidently knowing that he was in the hands of his boss, but the gang and the passengers followed them with laughter and cheers.
 "Good-by, Jesse!" shouted Shorty.
 "Give him Jesse," added Shorty, Jr.
 "Let him finish his speech!" said Gus.
 "Yes—yes! Speech—speech!" was the cry which several persons took up.
 "You keep back!" shouted Mrs. Kedunk, turning and shaking her fist at the crowd. "You have play-

ed enough tricks on him tu-night. I'm goin' tu put him tu bed."

This, of course, raised another cheer for the old assemblyman in which everybody joined.

But before the crowd could catch up with them, she managed to unlock their stateroom door and to rush him inside out of sight and reach.

However, Shorty and his gang were not inclined to give up the sport in that way, so they gathered around the assemblyman's stateroom door and began to sing:

"Just Think of Your Head in the Morning!"

While the serenade was in progress they heard a wild controversy going on in the stateroom.

"Maria, let me out! They expect a speech from me. Lemme go!" he was heard to say.

"Jesse Kedunk, you undress yourself and get into that bunk or I'll twist yer ear for yu," the wife replied, and of course a shout followed.

"Speech—speech!" was the outside cry.

"Lemme go, Maria!"

"Now shut up and go tu bed or I'll box your ears for you!"

"Them's my 'stitutents, Maria. Lemme out!"

Meanwhile the song was going on, and between the verses there arose a cry for a speech from Kedunk.

But Maria came to the front every time and kept her ambitious husband in the background so that the guys, his tormentors, could not get him out.

In vain he tried to convince her that "Mr. Astor" wanted him to go out and finish his speech; that "Mr. Stewart" was anxious to hear his views on the political situation; that "John Kelly" was probably pining to hear his views regarding state politics.

"Lemme out!" he yelled.

"Jesse Kedunk, if yu don't take off them Sunday clothes of yourn an' go to bed, I'll just warm yu as I did last week."

That settled it, and notwithstanding the distinguished men who wanted outside for him, he concluded that he had better "turn in."

So this ended the racket, and in spite of the songs they sang, and the calls they gave, the Honorable Jesse Kedunk could not be got past his wife to afford them any further gratification.

Well, after having all the fun they could get out of the elements around them, Shorty and his gang concluded to go to bed.

It was fun, and they enjoyed all there was to enjoy before anything in the shape of sleep could catch them.

On arriving at Albany the next morning they all went to Stanwix Hall for breakfast, this being the hotel where the agent had engaged board for the week which they were to play in the city.

The whole company, male and female, were seated at a single table, and were conversing on the various topics which naturally came up, when who should enter the dining-room but Honorable Jesse Kedunk and wife.

But she was doing about the same as leading him, for evidently he had a "head" on him, and was not himself at all.

Shorty and his gang gave him the grand laugh, which caused both him and his wife to look up in wonder.

Of course they took a tumble the moment they saw the company, and as they dropped into seats at the table next to them, there were opportunities to continue the guying begun the night before.

"Good-morning, assemblyman," said Shorty, which every member of the company repeated in the light of mock modesty and propriety.

The Honorable Kedunk not only tumbled, but he fell hard; *it hurt*. He remembered Gus Williams, as Mr. Astor; Shorty, as Mr. Stewart; Billy Barry, as John Kelly, and he felt sick. Consequently, he only bowed in the coolest manner to their salutations.

The guying became so hot that he concluded that he hadn't much of an appetite for breakfast, and so got out as soon as possible.

Thus far on their journey from New York they had enjoyed a heap of fun, and now that the principal cause of it had skipped out, they bestowed themselves as best they could in order to pass the day pleasantly, and be ready for the night's business.

But when night came there was a "big" house to greet the company, and the performance went off with a hurrah, Shorty taking the cake as usual.

It so happened, however, that Mr. Bundle was at the show, and, like everybody else, was greatly pleased with it.

But there was something about Shorty which attracted his particular attention. Where had he seen him before? That voice, that peculiar form—where had he encountered it?

This struck him especially during Shorty's last act, where he and the Kid had a banjo and tamborine solo. But when he came to sing his version of "Baby Mine," he was more puzzled than ever.

The papers gave the show a splendid notice the next morning, and another overflowing house greeted them the following night.

Little Mr. Bundle, the lawyer, was there again, and laughed himself red in the face as he had done the night before. But toward the end of the performance he discovered the bottom line on the programme, wherein Shorty announced himself as being in search of his dad, and then the old fellow took a tumble.

He turned around, and who should be standing near him but the Honorable Kedunk, to whom he had before that been introduced. They greeted each other, but there was only a trifle of enthusiasm in the assemblyman, for he, too, had recognized in Shorty the "Mr. Stewart" of his steamboat experience, and he felt just as though he had been taking oastor oil.

"Did you ever see that little runt before?" he asked, of the assemblyman.

"Did I? I tell you, Mr. Bundle, they're a bad lot, very bad. Why, do you know that that little scoundrel actually had the cheek to pass himself off as A. T. Stewart?"

"If he's the fellow I think he is, he has got cheek enough for anything, in addition to wearing two sets of teeth. I owe him a thrashing and he is going to get it before he leaves Albany!" and he turned and left the place in a huff.

Now it so happened that Billy Barry, whose business was over for the evening, was standing near at hand in company with Shanks, and they both overheard the threat.

Shanks, who had taken little or no part in the fun on board the steamboat, approached the Honorable Kedunk.

"I beg pardon, sir, but will you tell me who that small-sized old gentleman is who was just speaking to you?" he asked, respectfully.

"Yes, sir, I have the pleasure of his acquaintance. His name is Bundle, sir, Bundle, and he is a rich lawyer, sir," and Kedunk turned away just as though he had said all he ought to to an ordinary mortal.

Shanks sought Shorty, and related what he had overheard.

"Oh, hol dat's der ole duffer dat I'm lookin' for," said he, laughing.

"Well, he's goin' a-gunning for you with a whip."

"He is, hey? All right. He took one fall outer me, an' I took one outer him; but if he arn't satisfied, I'll try him some more."

"What's the riot between you?"

Shorty related the circumstances of his visit to Albany some time before in search of his dad, as the reader doubtless remembers it.

"Oh, I understand it, then," and Shanks laughed heartily.

"How is it?"

"Why, he remembers the affair and you, and seeing that bottom line on the bill, thinks that you put it there to guy and remind him of it."

"Guess dat's so," mused Shorty.

And Shanks had actually hit it right, for that was precisely the view that Mr. Bundle took of it, and he wanted a small quantity of gore.

Shorty thought over the matter awhile, and after the performance was concluded he sought one of the reporters of a morning paper, and gave him an account of the whole affair, which resulted, in the next issue, in the following:

"A LITTLE ROMANCE."

"Of course everybody knows Shorty, whose fine variety troupe is now delighting the citizens of Albany, and they also know that he is a great practical joker. But few have suspected that there was a deep earnestness in the bottom line on his programme, wherein it is announced that he is in search of his father, yet there is. Shorty is a foundling, and it is not to be wondered at that he would like to know something of his parents. It is for the purpose of learning something of them, or at least causing general inquiry to be made, that he keeps that line standing. But evidence which is almost positive has lately been developed which points to a well-known lawyer, very short in stature, as being the father so long and earnestly sought."

"This lawyer is supposed to be a bachelor, but there is a skeleton in everyone's closet. Shorty was found in a bundle, and this goes far toward establishing his identity, so far as family name is concerned. Shorty has twice attempted to establish this identity, but has been cruelly rebuffed each time. However, it is now understood that he has additional proof, and he is about to proceed legally, for the purpose of compelling this heartless man to recognize the child he abandoned so many years ago. We shall watch the case with much interest."

Mr. Bundle read the article the next morning. Wasn't he mad? Didn't he howl and fight with everybody he met? Well, yes, and he wasn't the only person who recognized who was meant in the article, and he threatened to arrest the editor of the paper, to kill the writer, and pulverize Shorty into dust.

Bundle found himself the laughing stock of the town, and those who didn't laugh openly, cut or avoided him, so it is no wonder that he was mad.

But Shorty didn't know how very mad he was, and resolved upon paying him a visit some time during the day, although Shanks and the others advised him not to do so.

"What! I'll make der ole duffer b'lieve dat he's my dad afore I get finished wid him," and he and Gus Williams at once put their heads together to see how they could work it.

CHAPTER XII.

Yes, Shorty and Gus Williams put up the job of visiting Mr. Bundle, and demanding of him an explanation regarding the newspaper articles which had set the whole city of Albany laughing.

So each, with cheek enough for two rows of teeth, set out for the residence of the irate Bundle.

He was not in when they called, but as he was momentarily expected to return, they took seats in the reception room and waited.

Shorty got out of sight behind a big easy chair that stood against the wall, when he heard the old fellow coming, leaving Gus to work the racket according to the programme agreed on.

Bundle was looking daggers and meat-hooks as he entered the room. He had been guyed and laughed at by everybody he knew, and he was not in a very amiable mood, of course.

"Well, sir?" was his gruff salutation

"Is this Mr. Bundle?" asked Gus, soberly.

"Yes. What do you want?"

"A moment's conversation, if you please."

"Who are you—what's your name—what do you want?" he demanded, savagely.

"I am a lawyer, sir, by the name of Williams."

"Williams?"

"Of New York."

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you father this statement, sir?" asked Gus, handing him a marked copy of the paper in which the racket had been published.

The old fellow snatched it out of his hand and recognized it instantly.

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" he demanded.

"That's to be determined on hereafter, sir," replied Gus, bracing up. "What do you mean?"

"Do you come here to insult me in my own house, sir?"

"No, sir; but my client, the person herein mentioned and known as 'Shorty,' feels insulted, and——"

"The devil he does!"

"Yes, and has instructed me to demand a published apology, or to proceed against you for damages."

"Great and everlasting Moses!" and the old man started back completely paralyzed by the audacity of the statement.

"Sue me for damages—me, the party most ridiculed and injured? Well, I like that!"

"But my client does not."

"What the devil is the meaning of this, anyhow? Who is this runt? What does he mean by tormenting me so? I'll kick him all to pieces if I ever set eyes on him!"

Shorty felt uncomfortable in his hiding-place, for the prospect of being kicked all into cat-meat did not exactly suit him; so peeping out from behind the chair, and seeing that Bundle was standing with his back turned toward him, he stole out and took a seat softly in the chair.

"In that case, sir, he would have double cause of action."

"Oh, hang his action, and yours, too. I think this is one of his confounded jokes. He came to my house once before, and tried to make it out that I was his father."

"Well, in this case it appears that somebody else is trying to make it out."

"Oh, hang somebody else. It was some of his own doings," replied Bundle.

"But he thinks it was some of yours."

"Why don't you go to the office of the paper and find out about it?"

"That is what I have done, sir, already, but they pretend to know nothing about it, and so, if you refuse to apologize through the same paper, we shall sue you jointly."

Gus was playing his part well.

"The idea of my being his father!"

"Ah! that is what we think."

"Or anybody's father."

"We know nothing about that, sir. That is not to the point. And you were overheard to threaten my client—threaten to horsewhip him, sir."

"And so I ought—so I ought!"

"All of which will show motive, sir."

"It's an infernal outrage, sir."

"That's precisely the way we regard it."

"But, demit, sir, the outrage is against me, sir, me. Do you understand?"

"Very well, then, we shall have to allow the courts to decide between us. Come, Shorty," said Gus, arising to go.

At the mention of his name, Bundle turned quickly around.

"What, you herer?" he demanded.

"Yes, old man, here I am," replied Shorty.

"Confound your stunted, runtied body, I've a good mind to kick you into the street."

"Don't get off your cabase, ole man."

"How dare you darken my doors again, sir?"

"I didn't darken none of yer doors. Never darkened a door in my life," said Shorty, as he was edging away to reach one which led to the hall.

"Get out of my house, sir!" and he started as though about to assist him with the toe of his shoe.

"Better be careful, Mr. Bundle, or you will make matters worse," said Gus, standing in the entry.

"Hang you and your matters. Get out!"

Gus opened the front door and obeyed, thinking Shorty was close behind.

But Bundle lost control of himself and began to go for Shorty, chasing him around the room for the purpose of doing him bodily harm. Shorty would dodge behind chairs and then throw them down to let the old fellow fall over them.

Finally, however, he darted out towards the front door, closely followed by Bundle in a very angry mood, having barked his shins two or three times.

Just as he reached the front stoop, which he cleared at a bound, Bundle sent a terrific kick at him, missing Shorty, but taking his own feet out from under him and landing him on his head in a dreadfully demoralized condition.

"Ta-ta, daddy. How does that feel?" asked Shorty, laughing loudly, as did Gus.

The old rooster picked himself up, and without a word looked around in a dazed sort of a way to see where the mule was that kicked him.

"Ta-ta, daddy. Be good ter yerself, daddy, an' don't bump yer head," chirruped Shorty.

"Oh, go to the devil!" snapped Bundle, as he banged the front door shut, and was lost to sight.

This ended that part of the snap, but Gus wrote up a full account of the visit for the same paper, and the result was even more laughable than the first article.

That night, when Shorty made his appearance, he found a packed house, and received a tremendous ovation which lasted several minutes. He had pre-

pared himself with an original song, written by Gus Williams, and this he sang for his encore, each verse of which ended with the refrain: "And Bundle, he stood on his head."

It took like a house afire, and assisted materially in making Bundle seem ridiculous and Shorty popular. In fact, he might have played another week there and drawn good houses, had he not been billed for Troy and Lansingburg.

But Bundle didn't hear the last of the racket for a long time, and if he had fondly dreamed that it was forgotten, this chapter of my story will be very apt to undeceive him.

At Troy they had heard all about the affair, and the result was an overflowing house to welcome Shorty's Varieties, and especially Shorty himself, for the boys all felt as though they were personally acquainted with the comical little runt, having read so much about him in the favorite paper, *THE BOYS OF NEW YORK*.

They had lots of fun there, but probably nothing made the show more popular than a song that Shorty sang, relating to an actual occurrence there in the city, and which had afforded everybody a great deal of fun, as the hero was well-known.

It appears that a young fellow who went to see a girl, was greatly annoyed by her parents and brother, who refused to leave them alone. In fact, they did not like him a cent's worth, and so he thought he would put up a job on them.

It was about the time that the "lover's telegraph" first came into use, and learning how to work one of them, he bought it to take with him the next time he went to see her. But the song tells the story much the best. He sang it with banjo accompaniment:

When first I went to see my girl,
I courted her in the dark;
But her father and mother, and cock-eyed brother
Would watch us while we'd spark.
But I bought a new invention,
To give them all the laugh;
'Twas a little tin box with a string in the end,
Called the lovers' telegraph.

When next I went to see my girl
I hadn't but little to say;
I gave her one end of the little machine,
And sat about twenty feet away.
Her father thought I acted strange,
And called me a great big calf;
But he didn't know how the old thing worked
Through the lovers' telegraph.

"Oh, darling Nellie, dost thou know
I lovest thee the best?"
When soft the answer came to me:
"Oh, George, pull down your vest!"
"Oh, angel, wilt thou fly with me
To the land of the wild giraffe?"
She answered back: "How are you fixed?"
Through the lovers' telegraph.

Oh, love went flying through the string,
Till her brother found us out,
And then he whispered to his pa
What we had been about.
The old man gently raised his foot,
And split me nearly in half;
He burst a hole in my new pants—
And that lover's telegraph!

The song made a great hit, and is sung to this day among "the boys."

And it was at Troy that there transpired another sensation in the shape of a love affair.

Ella Mayo, being naturally a very handsome girl, looks even better on the stage, and a young fellow named Hess fell desperately in love with her. He was literally "mashed;" all broke up.

He sent her the handsomest bouquets he could buy; wrote her perfumed and highly seasoned notes; sent her presents of all sorts, and in various ways made a big calf of himself.

But as she cared nothing for him, of course he was a bore, especially as he was cheeky enough to show everybody that he was "gone" on her, and called the attention of everybody to the presents he made her.

"A mash" is no new sensation for this charming young serio-comic singer, but they sometimes go too far, and then she generally manages to give them a fall.

In this instance she had heard that he was boasting among his friends of his acquaintance with her, and how far he calculated to carry it. This annoyed her very much, and so she appealed to Shorty, giving him full particulars.

"Oh, I'll sugar dat duffer off," said he.
"Here is a note from him, asking me to meet him at an oyster saloon to-night," said she, indignantly.
"Dat's all right, baby, dat's all hunk."

"It is! Not much. Do you suppose I would do such a thing as that?"

"Course not."

"Then why do you say it is all right?"

"Cause I'll make it all right."

"How?"

"Well, yer jes write ter him, tellin' him dat yer'll meet him."

"What?" she demanded, quickly.

"Make him think yer mashed."

"Not much."

"Never you mind, I'll work der rest part of it, yer bet."

"How, a racket?"

"Yes. Yer jes write der letter."

"All right; I'll write," said she, laughing.

"An' I'll go right for him."

With this understanding they separated, and she sent the fellow a note, stating that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to meet and spend a few hours with him. But being so well known, she would not think of going into a public place without being closely veiled.

The letter pleased Shorty and he proceeded to carry out his part of the business, assisted by Billy Barry and several other members of his company.

As for Hess, he was simply delighted, and showed the letter to all of his acquaintances, telling them to be around at or near the saloon and see him waltz in with the famous beauty who had gone so completely mashed on him.

He was, in fact, a great ladies' man, and just mean enough to boast of his conquests, and so a large number of friends were on hand to see if he really did carry off the beauty whom half the fellows in town were trying to win a smile from.

At the show that evening he made himself very conspicuous by throwing a large bouquet at Ella, and afterwards telling several of his friends that he had an appointment to take her to supper after the entertainment.

Well, Shorty and the others worked the thing up in first-class style; Billy Barry, being the nearest to her in size, was selected to personate her, and he proceeded to dress himself in female costume and to make up to all outward appearance to resemble her.

But he blackened his face, over which was drawn a thick veil, and at the appointed hour he went to the place agreed upon where Hess was to be in waiting for her, followed by the whole gang, who stationed themselves in convenient places to see what should take place. Even Ella, closely veiled, was out to see the sport.

Hess was waiting for her, and his friends were waiting at the saloon for him, the proprietor of which was astonished at the rush of business without knowing the cause of it.

The boastful beau was all scented up and dressed to mash, and as Billy approached him, he hastened forward, all smiles and bows.

"Ah, Miss Mayo, I presume?" said he.

"Yes, Is this Mr. Hess?" asked Billy, imitating Ella's voice to a nicety.

"Your most obedient lover. Oh, how glad I am to take you by the arm; to have an opportunity of encircling your exquisite waist with my anxious arm, and telling you how I love you."

"I am so thankful," replied Billy, shyly.

"Do you say so, Ella? Am I then the happy possessor of your love?" and he tried to kiss her.

"Don't give it away, please."

"Ah, you do not know me, my dear girl! I would die first, believe me."

"But you may have other girls who love you."

"Well, a fellow can't help that, you know. I dare say that a great many love me, but I am not responsible for that, and care nothing for them. But even had I been ever so much in love when I first saw you, your haunting smile would have banished all such ideas. But come, let us go for some refreshments."

"Oh, please don't. It is such a beautiful night, and only think how much nicer a walk would be."

"Refreshments first, darling, and then we will go out for a moonlight walk or ride," said he, for he had no idea of disappointing his friends, who were waiting to witness his triumph.

"Very well, be it as you say," and he took the fellow's arm with all the grace of a woman.

In fact, he leaned on him a trifle as they walked along, and he hugged the arm up so close to him that it almost stopped the circulation of the blood.

The members of the company piped them off as they passed arm in arm along the street in the direction of the supper room, as did several of his friends who were scattered along the sidewalk.

"Halloo, Ella," said Shorty, seeming to meet them accidentally, and raising his hat.

"Good evening, Mr. Shorty," piped Billy.

"Ah, Ella!" chirruped Gus Williams, lifting his hat with considerable flourish.

"Halloo, Gus," he replied.

"Beg pardon, Miss Mayo," said Hess, "but how is it possible for those gentlemen to recognize you with your close veil?"

"Oh, they know my walk," and Billy began to wriggle himself and put on style.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder. Think I should know it myself among a thousand," and he squeezed his arm up against his body in the most expressive manner.

"Oh, you flatterer!"

"Not me, upon my word."

"Do you like my walk, pet?"

"Like it! Well, I should say so. It is the most beautiful and queenly walk that I ever beheld. It is positively splendid, and it is no wonder that you charm everybody while on the stage."

"Oh, pet, you are feeding me with peppermint-drops!" said Billy, in his most bewitching tone of voice.

By this time they had arrived at the saloon, where they took seats in a most conspicuous place, this being a part of Hess's plan to show off his conquest to his friends.

But not only were his friends there, but nearly every member of Shorty's troupe, and strange enough, everybody appeared to be hungry and to have ordered some sort of refreshment.

The whole thing was nicely arranged, but Billy appeared to be annoyed at meeting so many of the company.

"I say, pet, I don't like to stay here; there are so many people staring at me."

"Oh, don't mind them, darling."

"Do you suppose they know me?"

"I shouldn't think so. Never mind if they do. What will you have in shape of refreshments?"

"Are you sure that you have not told any of your friends or anybody about coming here with me?" asked Billy, placing his hand on Hess's arm.

"No—no, my beauty. Do you suppose for a moment that I could be guilty of such perfidy?"

"I should hope not, certainly, and yet it seems so strange to see so many here and all looking at me. I'll have a dozen on the half-shell and a bottle of Mumm," he added.

Hess at once finished the order and gave it to the waiter who was standing by.

"Now," thought the masher, "she will have to lift her veil to eat and drink, and then the gang can see her."

"I wonder what has made the company so hungry to-night?" mused the supposed Ella.

"It does look a trifle queer; but do you know I have an idea that they think it strange because you are so closely veiled," said Hess.

"Oh, no, I always go veiled this way when I am out. But it is very strange, I never knew them to be so hungry and dry before at the end of a performance."

"Suppose you raise your veil a trifle," he lovingly suggested.

"No—no; it would only make those other people stare the more. I wish they would go away."

"Ah, Miss Ella, that is a penalty of popularity."

"I—I suppose so," she faltered.

Just then the oysters came, and the wine was opened. A glass was placed before the veiled damsel.

"Miss Mayo, my kindest regards and hopes for our future meetings and happiness," said Hess, raising a glass of the sparkling wine to his lips.

"Well, here's luck, old man," said Billy, changing his voice and tearing off his veil with one hand and lifting the glass of champagne with the other.

A wild shout came from Shorty and his gang, while the friends of Hess were nearly as much astonished as he was, and gathered around.

Hess gazed at Billy for an instant like one in a dream, and comprehending the trick that had been played on him, he leaped to his feet.

"Here she goes, pet; here's to our future happiness!" said Billy, and drank another glass amid rears of applause that shook the building.

Hess uttered one word which would rhyme very nicely with "well," and then making a dash for the door, he darted out of it as though the devil had been after him with a sharp stick.

Shorty sat down and helped Billy finish the bottle, and amid the utmost merriment, the affair was brought to a successful issue.

But Hess, oh, where was he?

Well, it isn't certain to this day what has become of him. He is supposed to be in New York, but yet he may have left the country.

At all events, he never showed up in Troy after that tremendous racket, and yet, if he expects the memory of it has faded out, this chapter of "Shorty in Search of his Dad" will convince him that it is still remembered.

From Troy the company went to Lansingburgh, where they again encountered a good house, and where the fame of Shorty had long ago reached.

CHAPTER XIII

THE racket on Hess at Troy became known for miles around, and Shorty as the hero of it was talked of by almost everybody.

It became known in Lansingburgh before he reached there, and did more to bring out a full house than all the advertising done. In fact, Shorty's pranks, and the reputation he had for working them, did more for him wherever he went than all the pasting and billing could do.

Lansingburgh is one of the quietest old towns in the State of New York, although there are many bright lads to be found there, and many a bevy of pretty girls.

Shorty and his company took the town by storm, of course, as they did nearly every town they struck, and as a natural consequence there was a packed house to welcome them, where a dozen other shows had not attracted people enough to pay expenses, and had gone away cursing the town.

But the right ticket takes the old town, you bet.

And it was here that Shorty had another "dad" adventure—one of the most laughable of all he had so far encountered.

Of course the bottom line of the programme attracted considerable attention, as it always did—and among those who became thoughtful and interested over it was a little old Dutchman by the name of Hans Von Keifer.

What his history had been nobody knew, but he was thought to be worth some money, and to be a bachelor without heirs. At all events, he somehow became greatly interested in Shorty, and resolved to have a talk with him.

They were billed in Lansingburgh for three nights, and the day following the first performance, he waited upon Shorty at his hotel, sent up his card, and requested an interview in the parlor.

Shorty came down from his room, somewhat bored, thinking that it was some business which Shanks, his partner, should have attended to.

But when he beheld the pussy little Dutchman who stood but a trifle higher than he did himself, he at once put on a broad grin and became interested.

"Ha! dose vas Misdor Shordness?" he asked, getting up and approaching the little minstrel.

"Dat's me, ole man; halloo!"

"Goot!"

"Oh, it is, hey? How good?"

"I vos glat for ter spriken soedings mit you."

said the Dutchman, shaking him cordially by the hand.

"I suppose so. Well, how is it?"
 "Puddy goot."
 "How much of it yer got?"
 "So. Goot!"
 "I s'pose so. What is it?"
 "Yaw, I see me dot," said he, handing Shorty one of the programmes, "und I say dot I vill see 'bout dot pudgy quick."
 "Oh, yer did, hey?"
 "I dinks me dot maybe I vos bimeby your fader maybe," said he, laughing.
 "No?"
 "Yaw; I hear me dot you vos Dutch."
 "Oh, I'm Dutch as sauerkraut."
 "Goot! Und you have no fader?"
 "No; won't nobody have me."
 "So?"
 "They say I'm no good."
 "I dinks dot I vos yourn fader," said the little old man, looking serious.
 "What makes yer think so?"
 "I hear me 'bout dem tricks dot you blay."
 "Well?"
 "Dot makes me dink so, for, py jinks, I vos make me so much foolishness mit everybody all der vile ven I vos a kid."
 "On der racket, hey?"
 "Yaw."
 "Do it any now?"
 "Somedimes, I bade you."
 "Like a joke, hey?"
 "Yaw; besser as peer or sauerkraut."
 "How old are yer?"
 "Fordy-two."
 "Oh, ho!" thought Shorty; "so if he is my dad, he must have started young, seein' as how I'm 'bout thirty-five myself."
 "How old vos you?"
 "Oh, I'm under forty-two."
 "I dink me dot vos so. Vere you vos all der vile?" he added.
 "Oh, all over."
 "Bud vere you vos fust off?"
 "New York."
 "Dot is so. I lose me vone liddle poy den year ago in dot cidy, und he vos a smard liddle fellow, you bed."
 "Dat one of der symptoms, ole man," said Shorty, laughing.
 "I bade you!"
 They laughed at each other, but there was about as much resemblance between them as there is between chalk and cheese.
 Shorty, however, was disposed to humor the old fellow, seeing that he was honest and undoubtedly in earnest.
 "Ever seen my show?"
 "Yaw, last night, und I laugh me so much dot I bust mine puttons off."
 "Dat's anoder simpton, ole man."
 "Yaw. How old vos you ven you vos found?"
 "Bout six."
 "So! Dot vos der age of mine Pilly."
 "Oh, his name was Billy, hey?"
 "Yaw. How long ago vos it dot somepody find you in dot Ni Yark?"
 "Bout thirty years," said Shorty, soberly.
 "Vot vos dot you say?" exclaimed the old man, springing to his feet and glaring at him.
 "I'm givin' it ter yer straight, ole man."
 "Mine Gott in Himmel! How vos dem dings?"
 "Figger 'em out—I can't."
 "I dinks me dot I make von liddle misdake," said the little old fellow, looking puzzled.
 "Well, yes, it does look some like it."
 "I dinks me dot you vas not mine liddle Pilly dot I lost," said he, sadly.
 "If yer well fixed, I'm sorry, too."
 "Oh, mine liddle Pilly. Vare is mine liddle Pilly?"
 "Give it up. I'm lookin' for a little ole man with a wart on his bugle," said Shorty.
 "A wart on his vot?" he asked, surprised.
 "Wart on his bugle."
 "Vot vas a wart, und vot vas a pugle?"
 "A wart, is it?"
 "Yaw."
 "An' a bugle?"
 "Yaw."
 "Well, a wart is a wart, an' a bugle is a bugle," said Shorty, with a grin.
 "Von of dem tings dot you blay 'toot—toot' on?"
 "Now yer whistle."
 "Oh, a pugle. Yaw, I forstay. Bud vot is a wart?"
 "A corn without a shoe on it."
 "I see me nod dot," said he, shaking his head.
 "Yer could see it if yer had one."
 "Oh, dot English language makes me so sick. You look for a man dot hafe a corn on his pugle?"
 Shorty winked and nodded.
 "Dem tings beat all dot I know of English-spricken. I dinks dot you make some foolishness mit me all der vile."
 "Oh, no, honest Injun."
 "An Injun mit a corn on his pugle?"
 "Maybe he's an Injun."
 "Nix forstay," said he, sadly, for with his imperfect knowledge of the English language, he could not get the drift of Shorty's slang, and so he wisely concluded to give it up, seeing that there was no prospect of making it out that Shorty was his long-lost son.
 "Well, have a ball?" asked the little joker.
 "Vot vas dot?"
 "Ball."
 "I blay me nod dot beese ball."
 "Want ter be 'blowed off'?"
 "How vas dot?" asked the puzzled Dutchman.
 "Fire in one?"

"I see me nod vot you say."
 "Have a drink?"
 "Yaw; I hafe some peer," said he, fully understanding that question.
 "Good 'nough. Come down stairs," said Shorty, leading the way.
 "Dot Englisher language vas too much for me," he muttered, as he waddled along.
 On reaching the bar-room they found the gang there listening to some of Gus Williams' "chestnuts," and the moment they saw Shorty and the little old fellow coming in, arm in arm, they sent up a shout.
 "Found his dad at last," said Billy Barry.
 "Sure case this time," suggested Harry Kennedy, laughing.
 "He's got 'em bad," added Gus.
 "Yes, boys, I's found him at last," said Shorty, looking honest. "How d'yer like his nibs?"
 "First-class!"
 "Good fit!"
 "Chip of the ole block!"
 "Two ole blocks, I should say," added Shorty, Jr., regarding them.
 "Come 'n fire in one on der strength of it; I'm shoutin'," said Shorty.
 "Oh, we'll all take a hand in the 'fire-works,'" said Gus. "Give me a beer."
 "Senators, Hans Von Keifer," said Shorty, introducing him.
 Von Keifer shook hands with them all around, and while they were saying how delighted they were at making his acquaintance, he was vainly trying to explain his presence in their midst. But he got mixed up so badly that he didn't know where he was himself, when Gus came to his rescue, imitating the old fellow's Dutch and style to a dot.
 "Ah, I doles you 'boud how dem dings vas all der vile," he began.
 "Yaw, goot!" said the old fellow, glad to find somebody whom he thought would get him out of the snarl he was in.
 "Herr Von Keifer vas lose his liddle Pilly ven he vas a poy; dot is ter say, ven der poy vas liddle, nod Herr Von Keifer. So! Und ven he make come py dose hotel, he come in here ter find dot liddle Pilly poy. So! Und he say, everypody come und dake a drink mit me; und ve say—"
 "Yes," chorused the gang.
 "Of course."
 "Why not?"
 "He shouts!"
 "He balls!" and a dozen other wild answers drove the old fellow almost distracted.
 But he knew what was expected of him, and went to the front like a little man.
 "Now we understand it," said Billy Barry.
 "Mine Gott! I hopes you do, but I don't," said Von Keifer, drinking his beer.
 "Oh, dat's all right now, ole man. Fill em up again, ramrod," said Shorty.
 True, the old Dutchman was completely bewildered, as who escaped being who fell into the hands of that gang? But he had lots of fun in him, and stuck to them until he had lots of beer in him, and then they made him sing and dance before the crowd who had gathered to see the fun. In fact, they kept him on a string all the afternoon, and finally sent him home in a carriage, so full that the beer ran out of his eyes.
 Well, this was about all that happened in Lansingburg worth mentioning, and after playing three nights to very good business, they went to Saratoga, leaving pleasant memories behind them, even with Von Keifer, who (after he had got the swelling out of his head) enjoyed many a hearty laugh whenever he remembered the racket that they worked on him. But he was exceedingly careful how he went hunting for his "liddle Pilly" after that.
 At Saratoga they found that their fame had preceded them, for the *Saratogian* had republished both the Albany and Troy rackets, creating quite as much merriment as the originals had.
 The hotels at this season of the year (being all summer hotels) were closed, and the agent of the troupe had engaged board for them at three or four different private houses.
 Shorty, Gus Williams, Harry Kennedy and Shanks were quartered at one house, while the others were more or less scattered.
 The first night's house was a "corker," and after the show was over they felt like having a little private "circus," in fact, any number of them. Especially was this the case with Shorty, as usual, for the little runt was never too tired for fun.
 Harry Kennedy was also full of life, and was ready with his ventriloquism to assist in anything that might come up.
 The old woman who kept the boarding-house where they stopped was a tart old granny. She was eager to make all the money she could out of the gang, but if they made the least disturbance, she was on her ear right away and wanted to fight.
 Shorty and his companions were not long in finding this out, and, as a matter of course, they did all they could to work her up to the boiling point.
 It was the second night after their arrival that the old gal met them in the parlor on their return from the show.
 "Gentlemen," said she, "I keep a respectable house, if it is a boarding-house, and I wish you to understand that I will not have so much noise after you retire to your rooms."
 "What is the trouble?" asked Shanks.
 "Trouble! This is not a gambling-house, I'd have you know," said she, sharply.
 "Who said it was?"
 "But you were gambling up stairs last night and making a noise."
 "How do you know we were gambling?"

"Because I listened at the door. I won't have such goings on in my house."
 "My dear madame, we were only playing a little game of Methodist poker—"
 "I know it—I know it!"
 "To see whether we should pay you three or four dollars a day for board while we stayed here."
 "I don't believe a word of it, sir, not a word of it. You would sooner run away and never pay a cent," said she.
 "My dear madame, you are mistaken."
 "No, I'm not. I know what you showmen are."
 Harry Kennedy had made friends with her old cat in the meantime, and was quietly stroking her fur while the conversation was going on, the cat raising up her back most lovingly at every stroke he gave her.
 "Very fine cat you have here, Mrs. Lemon," said Harry, but she only looked contemptuously at him.
 "A regular sooner cat."
 "I only trust that you will behave yourself as well as the cat does," she said.
 "Tell her to shoot herself!" the cat seemed to say, in a piping voice.
 The reader will at once recognize Mr. Kennedy's artful ventriloquial power in making the old cat appear to talk.
 The landlady started back in surprise.
 "Oh, dat's all right. I know'd she was a talker when I fust seed her," said Shorty.
 "Of course," chimed in the others.
 "All she wanted was to be drawn out," said Harry, and the gang looked serious and interested.
 "What's the matter with that cat? Did she speak?" the anxious old woman asked, approaching nearer.
 "Of course. Didn't you know she was a talker?"
 "She's an old fraud," the cat seemed to say, and then the boys laughed.
 "Mercy on me!" exclaimed the old woman, breathlessly. "What does it mean?"
 "She starves me!"
 "What a lie!" squealed Mrs. Lemon.
 "She's an old fraud!"
 "Gracious goodness!"
 "The old cat seems ter know yer," said Shorty, laughing heartily.
 "You bet I do!" and Harry manipulated the cat something as he does his little dummies when doing his act upon the stage, causing her to look around at her mistress and move her head to suit the action to the word.
 This made the old gal squeal right out, and she looked as though she was going to faint.
 "Quick, some water!" shouted Gus, and Shanks ran to the kitchen for some.
 "Oh, she's only making believe!" said the cat.
 "Oh—oh—oh!" she screamed. "Kill that awful cat! oh—oh—oh!" and she tried to tumble into Gus Williams' arms for the purpose of fainting.
 But Gus stepped aside, and let her tumble whack upon the floor. This made her mad, and she was on the point of getting up and scratching his eyes out, when Shanks returned with a big dish of water and threw it all over her.
 This brought her to in a hurry, but in the meantime Shorty had snapped a patent clothespin (which he always carried) upon the old cat's tail, and she gave one bound and landed upon Mrs. Lemon with tail erect, back up, and claws out.
 During the next two minutes there was the greatest hurrah and mixing up of clawing cat and clawing landlady that was ever seen, during which the gang ran up stairs to Shorty's room.
 Of course there was a grand laugh, but after the old woman and the cat had got through with their little scrimmage, and tabby had been "fired out," they heard her storming around and threatening what she would do in the morning, which "what" was nothing less than having them arrested for assault.
 But this did not prevent the boys from having their laugh out, or from having a quiet "game of poker" after the thing had got quieted down.
 But Mrs. Lemon had her back up high, and after passing a sleepless night—which she was greatly assisted in doing by the gang—she made an early start in the morning for a justice of the peace, for the purpose of swearing out a warrant for the arrest of Shorty, whom she recognized as the leader of the racket.
 On going down to breakfast, however, they became aware of what was on foot, for Shorty "staked" the colored servant, and he gave it all away.
 "Gon' fo' a constable, shuah," said he.
 "What for, sweetness?" said Shorty.
 "Well, she say dat she nebbber was so 'sulted in de whole cos' ob her life," said he, with a grin.
 "Got 'em bad, eh?"
 "Dat am what she say, boss," replied the darkey, opening his mouth wide enough to take in a sewing machine. "Guess you'd better scatter."
 "Think she is in earnest?" asked Gus.
 "Boss, you don't know dat ole gal, fo' if yer did, yer wouldn't ax dat question."
 They geyed the servant during breakfast, and then retired to Shorty's room again.
 "We'll have some fun," said Shorty.
 "How, being arrested?" asked Kennedy.
 "No, in not bein', yer bet."
 "How'll you work it?"
 "Wait an' see."
 "Oh, we'll wait," said Gus, lighting a segar.
 There was no doubt but that the old gal had gone off for the purpose of having them arrested, and so Shorty began to make preparations for it.
 Sending Shanks and the others away so as to be out of the reach of any warrant that might be brought to bear upon them, he proceeded to dress

himself in his monkey suit, taking great pains to work the thing fine.

He had scarcely succeeded in getting things just as he wanted them before Mrs. Lemon returned, bringing with her a "Saratoga constable," who had a warrant for his arrest for assault.

Of course she took him directly to Shorty's room, but on opening the door, all they could see was a big monkey, perched upon the bureau and chattering away very indignantly.

"What is this?" demanded the constable.
"Oh, they have fled," said she, looking around; "but this is one of their horrible beasts. Take him into custody, and they will be sure to show themselves."

"But I haven't a warrant for a baboon."
"Never mind; take him, and they will be sure to come after him."

"He—he seems a ferocious animal."
"Nonsense; take him into custody."
"Are—are you sure he's—that is—harmless?"
"To be sure he is. Who ever knew a monkey to bite? I'm ashamed of you, sir," said she, mockingly.

The constable had his official reputation to maintain, and so he proceeded to take the monkey into custody, approaching him cautiously.

But he wasn't half cautious enough for his own good. He had no sooner got near enough to him than Shorty gave a terrific yell and leaped upon the officer's back.

Seizing him by the hair, and holding on by his hind legs, as he knew so well how to do, he fired his pistol in the air, frightening both the constable and the landlady half out of their wits.

They both made a break for the door, yelling like loons, while Shorty clung to the officer, and kept firing chamber after chamber of his revolver, and the other people in the house flew to see what the row was all about.

Out of the front door they ran, and it would have been the solving of a prize puzzle to say which of them was the most frightened, the officer, or the old woman. But at the front gate Shorty leaped from his back, and ran chattering back into the house and up to his room.

No return, however, for that constable. He never stopped running until he reached a doctor's shop, into which he rushed and announced that he had been shot full of bullets, besides having his brains blown out by one of the most renowned desperadoes ever known.

The doctor hastily examined him, and finding no wounds on his person, but believing him to be drunk, he kicked him out of his office, and told him to go home and sleep it off.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD Mother Lemon was quite as much frightened as the constable was, and without allowing the grass to grow under her feet, she ran to a neighbor's house and announced breathlessly that the devil was after her.

They tried to talk her out of it, but it was some time before they could get her quieted down sufficiently to accompany them back to her house, where, upon investigation, they found Shorty in bed, pretending to be sick from the fright he had received by a huge monkey that she was permitting to roam through her house.

In fact, so well did he play his part (after having hidden his monkey dress) that the old woman was greatly beside herself. But he brought her to her senses by threatening to sue her on account of it.

"Do you pretend to tell me that that monkey was not your own property?" she demanded.

"Never owned a monkey in my life, and I think you keep that one to get square with yer enemies. Drove all der boys away," said Shorty.

The old woman looked frightened and puzzled.

"Well, if it wasn't your monkey, whose was it?"
"Give it up, ole gal, but I tell yer yer can't play roots on travelers."

"Now I'll leave it to any person in Saratoga if I ever owned such a thing as a monkey."

"But whether it was your'n or not, yer 'lowed it ter bounce 'round yer shebang, an' scare folks half ter death; so yer liable, ole gal."

"Liable for what?" she asked, in alarm.

"For damages."

"Damages!"

"A thousand at least," said Shorty.

"No, sir, never."

"It has frightened me so I'm off my nut."

"What?"

"Crazy—jiggy!" and Shorty began to slam around the bed furiously.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" she asked, in alarm.

"Look out for me; I'm liable ter break out any moment."

"Oh—oh!"

"I'm a-goin' ter bust!"

"Oh—oh! Please don't."

"There's ther monkey!" he suddenly exclaimed, pointing towards the door.

"A-a-h!" she yelled, and leaped up on the washstand.

"There he is!"

"Wa—wa—mercy!" and in attempting to turn around in order to see the terrible beast, she somehow got her feet mixed up, and down she came, bringing everything movable with her.

Did she yell?

Well, somewhat. It isn't certain that people heard her half a mile away, but if they had been listening they might have done so without any difficulty.

Her servants and boarders rushed into the room in

alarm, and there they saw her on the floor, kicking and clawing around in the wildest manner for somebody to "take him away."

Shorty was nearly bursting with laughter, and the scene presented was quite enough to work a sick mule into laughing.

"Oh—oh! Take it away!" she yelled.

"What is it?" they demanded.

"Drive it out!"

"What?"

"That horrible monkey."

"Where is it?"

"I—I don't know. Ask him," said she, pointing to Shorty.

"Git out! I didn't see nuffin'," said he.

"You said you did."

"Well, I'm off my cabase."

"What is that?"

"I've got 'em."

"What do you mean, for goodness sake?"

"I told yer dat I war crazy on 'count of yer bloody ole monkey. Look out for me!"

"Oh, ah!" was the mixed exclamation, as all hands rushed from the room, leaving Shorty roaring with laughter.

But presently Mrs. Lemon poked her head in at the open door.

"I want you and your gang to leave my house," said she, sharply.

"Didn't think dat we was goin' to take it wid us, do yer?" demanded Shorty.

"I am certain that any of you are mean enough to take anything."

"Oh, we won't take anything we can't lift, or dat's red hot."

"There's been nothing but mischief and strange doings here ever since you came, and I won't stand it any longer. So take your bag and baggage, and get out at once."

"Look out!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"Ah, that won't do; you can't frighten me again in that way."

"Look out for me!" and he threw down the bed-clothes, as if about to leap out upon the floor.

The old woman gave one yell, and darted from the room, utterly confused, defeated and broken up.

Shorty dressed himself while finishing his laugh, and then started off to join the other fellows who were waiting to hear how the old thing worked.

Of course, Mrs. Lemon was glad to get clear of them, although she was somewhat in doubt as to whether Shorty would attempt to claim damages and "squeeze" her still further. But she would gladly have forgiven them what they owed her if they only would stay away forever.

Indeed, she was all broken up, and what was more, she wasn't certain about that dreadful monkey, and it might be in the house even now, for aught she knew, and so she armed herself and everybody else in the house with all sorts of weapons, and began a careful search of the premises for the beast that had made so much trouble.

Of course she did not find it, and eventually came to the conclusion that it had somehow managed to effect its escape, and then she turned her attention to her cat that Harry Kennedy had caused to talk—or to appear thus gifted.

"I verily believe those rascals bewitched you, poor Tabby. Come here and let me see you," she said, cautiously approaching her.

The cat humped her back and rubbed a table leg with herself.

"What is the matter with you, puss?"

"Meow!" was her only reply, and she looked up at her in a wild, unnatural sort of a way, which caused her mistress to step back a trifle.

"I am sure they bewitched her, for I heard her talk just as plain as day, and if I don't kill her, no knowing what may come out of it. Yes, she must be drowned."

In half an hour afterwards Shorty and Harry Kennedy were walking along Main street when they met the colored waiter man, having the doomed cat under his arm, with a brick tied to the end of a short, stout cord that was fastened around its neck.

"Ah, William! whither away with the feline?" asked Harry.

"Wal, yes, sah; I's feelin' rufer bad 'bout it, sartin," replied the darkey, not understanding what was meant by the word "feline."

"What yer goin' ter do wid der poodle?" asked Shorty, grinning.

"Oh, der cat. Wal, sah, I's gwine fo' ter make her commit susunside in de river."

"What! Going to drown that talking cat? I am amazed."

"So am Miss Lemon, sah."

"At what?"

"She says, sah, dat de ole cat hab got some ob de 'ole boy' in him, an' she's 'fraid ob it."

"Must be der cat she's 'fraid of, for I think she wouldn't run much from der ole boy."

"Now that's too bad. Here, William, here's a half a dollar for you. Give me the cat, and tell the ole gal that she's in the river," said Harry.

"All right, boss; but don't you gib me 'way."

"No; and don't you give me away."

"No, sah; I'll keep mum, fo' if I blowed, she'd bounce me."

"That's all right, then," said Harry, taking the cat and hiding her, brick and all, under his overcoat, while the darkey returned home, and, with an honest face, reported the old cat as down among the eels at the bottom of the river.

As for Shorty, he had another job to put up on Mrs. Lemon, being no less than hiring a lawyer to go and see her, and make it out that unless she fulfilled her original agreement by keeping the gang the full time arranged for, namely, another night, that she

would be sued for damages, and all her property attached.

This frightened her into submission, and she consented to receive them back again all right.

It was their last night in Saratoga, anyway, and the next morning the company was to start for Syracuse, and so they were all in for having as much fun as possible, while they remained in town.

There was a "paying house" to receive them that night, and after enjoying about three hours of solid fun, they retired well pleased with the show, and voted Shorty a brick.

Meanwhile Harry Kennedy and Gus Williams had been at work upon the old cat.

Releasing her from the brick which was tied to her neck, they replaced it with what is known on the stage as a "property" brick, that is, something that looks just like a brick, but is made out of pasteboard. These "bricks" are used in various ways on the stage, but mostly in pantomimes.

This substitute was so light of course that the cat had no difficulty whatever in dragging it about; and keeping her confined until they were all ready to go to Mrs. Lemon's when the show was over, they anticipated quite a deal of fun.

Just before starting, however, Harry gave the old cat a good wetting so as to make her look as though she had escaped from the river, and then he placed her under his coat out of sight, where she was glad enough to remain very quiet, as she would otherwise be cold.

Mrs. Lemon didn't half like it, but rather than have a lawsuit, she concluded to tolerate the company one night longer, and so she met them in the parlor when they returned.

"Halloo, ole gal! where's dat monk?" was Shorty's careless salutation.

"Yes; trot him out, and let's see him cut up," said Gus Williams.

"Bring out yer menagerie."

"Gentlemen, that monkey was not mine, and I know nothing whatever about it. But I do know that you have not behaved yourself since you came to my house, and I shall be very glad when you are gone," said she, tartly.

"Oh, no, yer won't," suggested Shorty.

"Yes, I will, too. There's been nothing but deviltry going on ever since you came here."

"Where's your cat?"

"Alas! I had to drown her—a dear old cat that I thought the world of, and all because some of you put the devil into her."

"Poor Tabby!" they all exclaimed in chorus; and just then Harry imitated her "mew" in a most pitiful way, at which everybody started.

"Goodness me! what was that?" asked the landlady.

"A cat," said Shorty; and they all pretended to be very much alarmed.

"William, come here instantly," she called, after Harry had mewed again. "Quick!"

The darkey hurried to the room.

"Did you drown that cat?"

"Yes, ma'am," stammered he.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Just then there was another mew that sounded directly behind where Mrs. Lemon sat. She turned excitedly around to see what had made the noise, when Harry placed the cat on the floor without being observed.

And a sick-looking tabby she was, for being as wet as a drowned rat, she was terribly ruffled up by being carried under Kennedy's coat, and with a mournful, wail-like mew, she started toward her mistress, dragging the pasteboard brick as she did so, and evidently glad to get home again.

That guilty darkey started as though a mule's hind legs had grazed his head.

"Oh, my golly!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Lemon, turning suddenly.

Beholding her cat with the brick still tied to her neck, and evidently just from the river, she uttered a yell that alarmed the house, and jumped upon a chair, frightened half to death.

"What's the matter?" they all asked, seemingly in great surprise, for it was a part of the job to pretend that it was the ghost of her cat, and that it was invisible to them.

"The cat—the cat!" she exclaimed, pulling her dress close around her skinny shins.

"What cat?" they all asked, looking as though they did not see it.

"There—there! See it; see the poor thing with that cruel brick tied around its neck, oh—oh! It must have escaped from the water and made its way back home again."

The gang looked at each other in surprise.

"She's got 'em," said Shorty.

"All broke up," suggested Williams.

"Too bad—too bad!" sighed Shanks.

"Pussy—pussy—pussy," called the terrified Lemon.

"Meow—ow—wow!" chimed the cat.

"What's the matter, madame?" asked Kennedy.

"Why, my cat there," said she, pointing.

The old feline was licking down its ruffled coat at this time.

"I see no cat," replied he, looking around.

"There—there! look! Oh, take off that cruel brick; the poor—poor thing."

"Madame, you are excited; there is no cat there. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, she's got 'em bad. Better take more water in yer gin," said Shorty.

"What is that you say? No cat there?"

"Nary."

"Nix. You've got a bad turn of 'em to-night."

"If you think you see a cat, it's probably the ghost of the cat you murdered," said Shanks.

"Good Heaven! suppose it is her ghost?" she cried, in alarm.

"Serves you right."

"Oh, it cannot be. William, come here." She called after her man who had got out into the entry and was scratching his woolly head in order to think how he should get out of the scrape he was in.

He finally concluded, however, to play out the "ghost" racket until he could manage to get her out of the way again.

"Yes, marm," he said, presenting himself.

"Take that brick from her neck."

She was still standing in the chair, a perfect picture of fright, not daring to encounter her old pet.

"Took de brick off who neck?" he asked.

"Why, off of Tabby's neck, poor thing. It was not heavy enough to keep her down."

"Don't understand yer, marm."

"What! don't you see that cat there licking herself?" she demanded, angrily.

"Lick me if I does, marm," said he, with a grin.

This utterly demoralized the old gal, and she really believed that she was standing in the presence of a feline ghost.

"Wuss case I ever seen," said Shorty.

"Dreadful!" said several of the others.

As for Mrs. Lemon, she uttered a little scream, and tumbled over out of the chair on top of Gus, and in the confusion that ensued, William caught up the cat and ran with it towards the river.

The old lady was put to bed and given a glass of hot gin, which she was very fond of, and the gang went up stairs to have their laugh out and to get ready for a start in the morning.

The darkey was too excited to notice that the brick was any different from the one he had tied on to the cat at first, and being anxious to get the job off his hands as quickly as possible, he threw the cat into the river and started back home.

But the cat got back almost as soon as he did, and astonished everybody by marching into the house for her breakfast the next morning.

This frightened the darkey almost as much as his mistress had been the night before, and it took nearly a week to get things quieted down in the house, although it resulted in Tabby's being allowed to live, and a general understanding all around that they had been badly sold, fooled and joked by that awful little wag, Shorty.

Nothing worth recording happened at Syracuse, where they played two nights, after which they went to Rochester for three nights.

Meantime Shorty was making but little progress in searching for his dad, and as for the line on the bottom of his programme, wherein it was announced that he was in search of his paternal parent, nearly everybody regarded it as a guy, or one of Shorty's jokes.

But he found numbers of friends if he did not find his dad, for he was well remembered from his last visit there, and the result was good business and a little barrel of money.

From Rochester they went to Buffalo, and on the cars between the two places Shorty managed to pick up a little fun.

Among the passengers was a very heavy swell of a fop who had been to Europe, and who put on more frills than a turkey after escaping Thanksgiving.

Shorty took his measure at once, as did the other members of the company, and they guyed him most unmercifully. Gus Williams, who loves to get hold of such characters, drew him out, all the while imitating his loud voice and manner until everybody in the car was laughing.

But his particular object was soon visible, being nothing more nor less than the "mashing" of Ella Mayo, who sat in a seat on the opposite side of the car. He was determined to show her that he was the most elegant fellow living, and whenever she would smile at some of Gus' jokes, he would take it all to himself, and calculate that he was gradually crushing her.

Once or twice during the journey he got up out of his seat and went to the end of the car to view his magnificence in a mirror, and the last time he got up, Shorty, who sat directly behind him, placed four little pieces of healthy shoemaker's wax upon the seat he had been sitting on.

When he returned he planted himself down with a flourish and a killing glance at Ella, who knew nothing about the wax.

But Shorty managed it with Gus in this way. He was occupying the seat with Miss Mayo, and Shorty called him to come over, that he wanted to speak to him about some business.

"Take his nibs over an' interduce him ter Ella, an' you take his seat; I wants ter chin yer 'bout somethin'," said he.

"Certainly. Would you like to change seats with me, Mr. Spoonbill?" asked Gus, addressing the fop, who was by this time well fastened down.

"Oh, ah, certainly—that is I—if I could have—ah, the pleasure—ah, of—"

"That's all right, I'll introduce you. Come."

Gus started to go to the seat occupied by Ella, and Spoonbill leaped to his feet in ecstasy. But as he did so there was a r-r-r-rip, and he left the seat of his pants on the cushion where he had sat.

Half bewildered by the occurrence, and not knowing what else to do, he started for the retiring-room at the end of the car, all the while pulling frantically at his bob-tail coat to get it down far enough to hide the fracture.

He was doomed to further mishap, however, for there was somebody else in there at the moment, and there he was obliged to stand backed up against the door to hide his terrible rent, while everybody in the car was roaring with laughter at the comical sight.

But he finally managed to get in out of sight. And

he kept out of sight until after the train had reached Buffalo, and his tormentors and the others who had witnessed his humiliation had left the train, after which he called a cab and was driven to the nearest clothing store.

But, oh! could he have got hands on Shorty, how he would have waltzed him. However, he got a pair of pants that he felt sure were stronger than any wax that might be brought in contact with them, although that which Shorty had was as strong as a mule, and he always had some of it about his person or within his reach, just to take advantage of such occasions.

Well, of course the company laughed over the fop's mishap for a long time, although Miss Mayo assured the jokers that their turn would come sooner or later, and some of the rackets they had played on others would be played back on them.

"Dat's all right. I've had as many played on me as I ever played on oder fellers, an' I 'spect ter get some more afore I find my dad," said Shorty, thoughtfully.

They were billed to play a week in Buffalo, and as nearly every member of the company was well-known there, it was only to be supposed that they would do a first-rate business.

Shorty and the Kid were in fine feather, and even surpassed themselves, receiving a wild reception when they first made their appearance, both being well-known by the boys, who had read so much about them in *The Boys of New York*, the paper that contained so many of their triumphs and the record of so much of their fun.

CHAPTER XV.

We left Shorty with his variety troupe at Buffalo, where they had a warm welcome, and opened to a splendid house, calculating to remain there a week.

But Shorty was not so full of devilry as he generally was, and it attracted considerable notice among the members of the company, one or two of whom rallied him on it.

But he would give them no satisfaction, and turned the matter off with a laugh.

The fact was, however, he was feeling a trifle blue and thoughtful over the prospect of finding his dad.

True, he had had lots of fun growing out of the business, but it was really a serious matter with him, and at the outset he had gone into it in dead earnest. He would take all the fun that came along, and even go out of his way to get it, but he was honestly in earnest about finding his father, if possible, so that he might, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing who he was, other than Shorty.

"Waal, I think dat de ole bantam's in love," said Shorty, Jr., to Gus Williams.

"He has got the symptoms," he replied.

"Got 'em sure. Wonder who it is?"

Gus made no further comments on the matter then, but it set him to thinking, and the result was, Shorty received a letter the next day from a lady, which he afterwards permitted me to copy. It read as follows, and was written upon perfumed paper:

"DEAR SIR—I have known you by reputation for a number of years, and have often seen you perform on the stage. I hope you will excuse it in a stranger, but I must acknowledge that I am in love with you. I am a little bit of a woman myself, and my friends often call me 'Mrs. Shorty.' (I only wish I was!) So that now I have the opportunity, I have made up my mind to get acquainted with you. I hope you will not consider me too bold, but this is really the only way I have of doing, since I cannot get a regular introduction.

"Now, if you will call at my house to-night after the performance, I'll bet you will never regret it.

"Yours truly,

"KATE WALSH, 51 Blank st."

Shorty cottoned to it right away. It was not his first "mash" by quite a number, but this one seemed to please him very much, and during the remainder of the day he was as merry as a cricket under a warm brick.

The gang piped him off on the "Q. T.," and even went so far as to hint that they had several love affairs on hand. Said Gus Williams:

"I got a letter from a dame to-day, who is dead gone on me. And she's rich; rides in her own carriage. How's that?"

He did not address his remarks to Shorty, but he heard them, just as Gus intended he should.

"Oh, well," said Billy Barry. "I guess none of you've got much ahead of me in that line."

"Or of me either," put in Harry Kennedy.

Shorty was dead sure that none of them had a softer thing than he had, and he wanted to say so, but he held off for a while until their talk and boasting got him worked up, just as they intended it should.

"Bah! Who er you duffs feeding taffy to?" he said, finally.

"What's the matter?" asked Gus, in well assumed surprise.

"Smell er that," and he flourished the perfumed love-letter under his nose.

Gus knew the smell very well.

"How's dat for 'way up?"

"I give it up," said Gus.

"You duffs talkin' 'bout yer mashes."

"Mashes?"

"Yes. Dere's a gal, b'longin' ter one of der fust families of Buffalo, dead gone on me."

"Oh, come off!"

"What are you giving us?" said they all, to make him believe that they took no stock in his yarn.

"Bet yer fifty ter five I'm givin' it ter yer straight," said he, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"Too thin, old man; too thin."

"Make good."

"Show up!"

"Read it!"

"Oh, it's something he has written to himself," said Gus Williams.

"An old dodge, that."

"All right. You duffs laugh, but I'm bettin' that I win."

"Read it to us."

"All right, only I won't give away der name an' address," said he, and he proceeded to read the letter to them. "How's dat?" he then asked.

"Well, I guess it's so," said Harry, but the others pretended not to believe it.

At all events he felt so good that he treated the gang without ever tumbling to it that they had put the job up on him.

As well as he loved mischief himself, and ready as he was to put up rackets on others, he would occasionally get taken in quite as nicely as anybody.

Well, after the performance that night, he went to a barber shop and had some of the finest touches put on himself. The gang was watching for him on the opposite side of the street.

The conspirators were already scattered about the vicinity so as to see the fun.

They didn't have to wait long before they saw the carriage driven up to the door. Shorty bounced out upon the sidewalk, and handing the driver a dollar, dismissed him with a lofty wave of the hand.

The house was a handsome and aristocratic one, and Shorty tripped up the front stoop and gaily rang the bell. A colored servant answered it.

"Miss Kate Walsh in?" he asked.

"Who?" the darkey asked, in surprise.

"Kate Walsh."

"No such person heah, sar."

"Hush, Henry, hush! I received a letter from her to-day, asking me to call."

"Don't know nuffin' 'bout dat, sar."

"Oh, here, my pretty blonde, I tumble. Here's a stake for yer," said he, handing him a half dollar.

"Now go an' tell her dat Shorty's here."

"Who I tell?"

"Why, der gal, Kate Walsh, of course."

Just then the boss of the house appeared. He was a big, frowning duffer, and in a loud voice demanded to know what was wanted.

The darkey informed him.

"Got a letter from her ter day," added Shorty.

"Oh, you did, hey?" said the man.

"Of course I did."

"Well, you dust out of this in three winks or I'll heave you off the end of my boot."

"What?"

"You are a sneak thief. Git!"

Poor Shorty! He didn't have a chance to "git," for that big man raised him on the toe o' his No. 13's and he landed like a lobster into a clump of thorn bushes at the bottom of the stoop.

The thorn bush broke his fall and probably saved him from breaking his neck, but he was "all broken up" nevertheless.

Scratched, pricked, bleeding and torn, he got out of that about as lively as he ever got out of any bad snap, and started towards his hotel.

The conspirators were convulsed with laughter, but followed him at a distance.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, after making certain that he was far enough away to be safe. "Dat's der biggest lift that I ever got. I'll bet dat it's a job put up by some of dem hamfatters on me," he mused, as he limped along.

After getting a block or so away, he stopped under a gas-lamp to look at himself. He wasn't a "pretty boy" any longer, not by a large majority. His face was scratched and bleeding; his glossy hat was mashed and mused; his clothes torn, and there was a lameness about his whole body such as he might have had if a mule had been fondling him.

Wiping his face, and slicking up the best he could, he started for the hotel again, calculating to get in unobserved.

But the gang reached there first, and were standing just where he would have to pass them, although so placed that he came plump upon them before he saw them.

"Halloo! What's this?"

"What has happened, old man?"

"Why, you're all broke up," they said, all seeming sober and sorry as they crowded around him.

Shorty saw that he was in for it.

"Been to see your mash?" asked Gus.

"I should say that he'd got mashed," said Kennedy, laughing.

"Gracious!"

"What an affectionate dame she must be."

"Now, dat's all right, boys, dat's all right," said Shorty, waving his hand.

"I shouldn't think so by your looks."

"Dat's all right, I tell yer."

"Did she do it? Did she go for you?"

"No; I went for her," said he, attempting to smile.

"Tell us all about it."

"Guess yer know all 'bout it now. But it's all right, I tell yer. It'll be my turn next."

"Well, I should say you had your turn," said Billy Barry, at which they all laughed.

"Dat's a good job, fellers."

"I'll be hanged if I should think so."

"I mean it's a good job for you duffs. But look out for me, I'm bad."

"Yes, you look bad."

This produced another laugh at Shorty's expense.

"Well, I s'pose you duffs want a ball."

"Oh, that suits me," said one.

"Yes, I'm in."

"Set 'em up."

Shorty led the way into the barroom, and when

once under the gas lights his appearance provoked a laugh from everybody present. In fact, when he got a look at himself in one of the large mirrors, he couldn't help laughing at the picture.

It was a sad but comical transformation.

But he braced up the best he could, and set up the beers for the boys until they got enough, after which he went to his room.

Here he found the kid, Shorty, Jr., who had retired early without knowing anything about the racket that they had worked on the old man.

Shorty was in hopes the little runt would be asleep, so that he could have a chance to wash up before he got a look at him. But in this he was also doomed to disappointment, for the little rascal woke up the moment he entered the room.

"Halloo, ole man, what's der matter?" he asked, sitting up in bed and looking at him with something like alarm.

"Well, what yer think's der matter?" he growled, turning away.

"Give it up if yer haven't been tryin' ter cut yer initials on a mule's hind hoof," said the Kid, laughing.

"Oh, yer go fight wid yerself."

"Say, did you fight wid yerself?"

"Shut up!" said Shorty, going to the washbowl.

"Did somebody shoot yer out of a cannon?"

To this he made no reply, but began to wash himself into something resembling himself.

During this performance, Shorty, Jr. was laughing and tumbling about in bed, but finally he stopped and looked sober again.

"Say, what got yer, dad?"

"Go inter a fight."

"Who wid?"

"A man."

"Thought it was a Thomas cat."

"Yer shut up an' dry up."

"But tell me did yer get away wid him?"

"No; I got away from him."

"Did, hey? Didn't get away quick 'nough, though, did yer?" said the laughing Kid.

"No," said Shorty, unable himself to keep from laughing. "But I'll get hunk, yer bet."

"Go it."

The next move was to get into bed and try and think how it had all happened. He could only suspect, however, that the other fellows had put up the job on him; and yet he was in no respect in doubt regarding how he felt, but no more "mashes" for him, not any.

Well, it was many a day before Shorty heard the last of that joke, for the fellows would "gag" about it in their acts on the stage, and in various ways reminded him of it. Gus Williams even went so far as to compose a song about it.

From Buffalo they went to Niagara Falls for one night, but they didn't have much of a house, and were glad to get away.

Cleveland was the next city, where they had been billed to play a week, and here they met with a splendid reception, and things looked bright for a lively season.

But Shorty had it in for that gang of jokers, having by this time become fully convinced that they put up the job, and that Gus Williams was the leader in it.

For the time being he gave up the finding of his dad, and devoted his energies to getting square with that band of racketers.

But how to do it, that was the question.

He succeeded in playing a joke on Gus one night during their stay in Cleveland, and it happened in this way:

In a traveling company the leader of the orchestra has charge of all music belonging to the different performers, and Shorty got hold of that belonging to Gus, and proceeded to doctor it. Cutting off the heading of the music of "Pins and Needles," he pasted it over another song, "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," and so on with several others, until he had produced one of the greatest mixes ever seen or listened to.

Gus was feeling in fine feather that night, and when his turn came he walked boldly out to sing "Pins and Needles," when the tune suddenly changed to the doleful "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother."

Gus was confounded, and so was the audience; also the orchestra. Those musicians were used to playing the notes placed before them without stopping to question, but having played so many times for this versatile Dutch comedian, and knowing that he never indulged in anything of the sort they were playing, they somehow became aware that something was wrong, and stopped.

Gus looked at the leader in a half surprised, half comical sort of way.

"Vale, Misder conductor, how vas dese dings, ain't id?"

This produced a laugh all over the house, during which the musicians eyed their music preparatory to trying it again.

But it seemed all right. There was the name, and Gus Williams' name on it, and not a thing seemed out of place.

"Now, once more for der segars," said Gus.

The leader gave the signal to begin.

"Pins and Needles," said Gus, severely.

Away they went on "Rock Me to Sleep" again.

"Hold on, misder conductor, I dinks me dot you hafe all got der jim-jams."

At this the music stopped again, and Gus was getting into a rage. The audience, however, regarded it as regular "business," always being ready to see anything new and funny by Gus, and they were really enjoying it.

So was Shorty, who stood at the wing and laughed at his tormentor's torment.

"Hold on! Dot vas almost too funny for anyding,

but I can't laugh. Try und see how you can work dot 'Liddle German Band.' Maybe dot will go better."

The conductor gave out the different parts to the musicians while Gus walked impatiently back and forth upon the stage.

With this piece of music Shorty had played a more comical change than with the first, for in making it, he had placed a few bars of the right music at the top of the page under the name of "Dot Liddle German Band," so that the orchestra started off all right, and Gus, greatly relieved, started off with the song.

But before he had sung two lines the music changed to "Massa's in the Cold—Cold Ground."

Gus stopped in greater astonishment than before, and glared at the leader, who was looking foolish enough to hang himself, and the audience was applauding the "act" as being wonderfully natural.

It was altogether too natural to suit Gus.

"Dunder und blixen, vot vas der madder mit you all der vile, hey? Guess you dake too many beers before you come here. Try again."

The puzzled leader again gave a signal with his violin bow and off they started once more, as also did Gus. But of course when the change in the music was reached there was more confusion and another laugh, although a great many of those in front appeared to know that something was wrong, but what it was they could not tell.

Shorty and the whole company stood at the wings watching the performance.

"I say, conductor, what's the matter with you?" Gus asked, after the applause had subsided.

"I don't understand it, but we are playing the notes just as they are written," said he.

"Oh, that's all right. It's a clear case of beer," said Gus, in an undertone. "Try 'You'll never miss the lager,'" and once more did that bewildered leader hand out the music to his puzzled musicians.

While this was going on, Gus walked to the wing where Shorty was standing.

"They're all drunk," said he.

"Sure yer perfectly sober yerself?" asked Shorty.

"Of course I am. Did you ever know me to go on any other way?" he asked, indignantly.

"I've known yer ter put up jobs."

Just then he got his chord for his parody on "You'll Never Miss the Water till the Well Runs Dry," and returned to the stage to sing it.

But after going on all right for three or four bars, the music suddenly changed to "Walking for dat Cake," and Gus got wild.

"What in thunder is the matter with you?" he yelled, and this time there was no mistaking about his being mad.

Then the audience began to hiss, in the midst of which Gus came to the front.

"Ladies und chendlemen, dem fiddlers hafe all got off der nut, und so I make you von demperance speech like dot Chon B. Gough;" and he proceeded to recite his comical burlesque on the celebrated temperance orator, which effort made a hit.

While this was going on the leader was vainly trying to get his music straightened out, and finally he discovered how the racket had been worked.

When Gus was called out, he handed him one of the "doctored" sheets of music and called his attention to it. Then he understood it all, and in a comical speech, in which he gave a history of Shorty's Buffalo adventure, he explained how he had probably retaliated on him.

This restored good humor, and when Shorty and the Kid came out, as they did right afterward, they received a stunning welcome, the boys giving him three cheers and a tiger from the gallery.

They were to do their double banjo act, each with an instrument proportioned to their size, and when they brought their chairs down toward the footlights, their comical make-up provoked another round of applause.

Taking seats, they crossed their legs and began to play. Then there was another roar of laughter, for Shorty had painted on the soles of his big shoes the words: "I am looking for my dad!"

This was a hit, but before they had been playing long, the Kid struck up his foot right alongside of the old man's, and on it was painted the words: "Don't give it away!"

Then there were thunders of applause, and yet Shorty knew nothing of the Kid's doings, and was at a loss to account for the new outburst.

They continued, however, and Shorty made still another hit by singing a song he had made up that afternoon, taking off the tribulations of a well-known Dutch singer who couldn't make connections with the orchestra.

As it was worked, the whole affair was turned into a roaring farce, which the audience enjoyed even better than they would had the original programme been carried out.

But Gus was badly sold, and to make it all the worse for him, the whole thing came out in the Cleveland *Plaindealer* the next morning, so that the laugh, both in public and private, was on the racketed Dutchman.

"How's dat for hunk, Gus?" asked Shorty, when they met the next day.

"Oh, that was good, as Charley says, it was the 'proper caper.' But I got out of it better than you did out of that Buffalo mash," said Gus.

"Dat's all right; an' if any of you duffers play any more of your stinkers on me, I'll make yer so sick dat yer creditors won't know yer."

"Good boy; but look out."

"Yer bet."

"You haven't found your dad yet?"

"No; and I guess I won't if I keep wid you hamfatters."

"Why not?"

"'Cause no respectable man would own me, seein' der gang I was wid."

"Then you have the assurance to suppose that if you even do find him, that he will be respectable? Well, that's good."

And so they chaffed each other during the remainder of their stay in Cleveland, where they did a fine business.

Their next stopping-place was Cincinnati, where they were to play another week.

CHAPTER XVI

At the close of their successful week in Cleveland, where Shorty got even with Gus Williams for the joke he played on him at Buffalo, they started for Cincinnati, the great hog mart and Queen City of the west.

Here every member of the company was well known, having played there before in various combinations, and consequently they were well received.

As for Shorty himself, every boy in the city regarded himself well acquainted, almost personally known to him, on account of having read of him and his pranks in *THE BOYS OF NEW YORK*, and so the moment he came upon the stage, there was one grand hurrah, and the air in the gallery was filled with hats and caps.

"Three cheers for Shorty!" yelled one of them, and those cheers were given with a "tiger" tied on behind.

Shorty bowed with a comical flourish that set everybody laughing.

"Thanks, citizens, thanks. Nothin' hoggish 'bout dat reception, was der?" he added, addressing those in the lower portion of the house.

"You bet," said several.

"I's heard dat yer cut up so much pork in dis city dat der boys got 'hoggish' on 'count of it. De chap dat told me so was a 'ham.' Of course I dec—'lard' dat it wasn't so, an' he 'brisled' right up at me. Yer see I wouldn't 'low him ter 'pork' fun at my friends without giving him a 'scald.' He grunted an' said dat maybe I s'pected ter strike it 'fat' here; I told him dat I rather 'leaned' dat way. I told him dat he was a 'bore.' He said he thought 'sow' too."

At this he started suddenly and held up his arm like a shield, as if he expected something to be thrown at him from the gallery, which of course produced an additional laugh.

"No bouquets, thank yer," said he, and amid applause he seated himself. "Dat's how I 'pickled' dat ham," he added, striking up a quick rattling piece on his banjo, and then began to sing:

"Oh, I's gwine ober to see my gal,
[A ripping banjo interlude:] Oh, my!
I's gwine fo' to 'scort her to a brack man's ball,
[Banjo as before.] Oh, my gracious!

My gal she dances in No. 9's,
[Banjo.] Oh, my!
An' when she gets warm, oh, how she shines,
[Banjo.] Oh, my ginger!

She am de apple core of my eye,
[Banjo.] Oh, my eye!
Gwine fo' ter marry dat girl bimeby,
[Banjo.] Oh, my ginger!"

"Yes, I war a-speakin' ter a chap de odder day 'bout my tender intentions regardin' dat charmin' piece ob smoked meat, an' he said dat he didn't want ter visit me after I got married, an' I axed him why not, an' he said dat he didn't want ter be dar when de 'tied' came in. Maybe yer isn't able ter comprehend de flow ob his remark. He axed me what my 'speculations war regardin' de future, an' I tole him dat my intended was a good washer an' ironer, an' he congratulated me on my bright prospects, an' said if he could find such a gal he'd have an eye on 'er. Hold on! don't throw yer bricks yet, for I've got some worse ones," he added, again looking up and dodging as though he expected to get hit with one.

Round after round rewarded him, and then he rattled away again on his banjo.

Being recalled, of course, he brought out the Kid, Shorty, Jr., with him, armed also with his banjo, and they kept the stage for nearly half an hour with their comical singing, dancing and playing.

With the older part of the audience Shorty was an increased object of interest on account of his being in search of his dad, although none of them regarded it as other than a joke. He was a good card before, but this made him even better.

And yet all the while he was getting no nearer the solution of the mystery surrounding his birth than ever, and sometimes he got very blue over it, though he most always kept it to himself.

Should he ever find his parents, or was he destined to live and die without knowing anything about them?

True, he was having all the fun he wanted, but he was not solving the mystery a cent's worth, and although he liked fun as well as a duck likes water, at heart he was almost always thinking about his dad.

"Guess I'll have ter go back east again," said he, to his partner, Shanks, one day during their stay in Cincinnati.

Shanks opened his eyes.

"Dat is, if I wants ter find my dad."

"How so?"

"Don't see any symptoms of der ole rooster out dis way."

"Well, what symptoms did you find of him when we were east?"

"Oh, I used ter have a racket wid once in a while one, don't yer know?"

"That's what makes you lonesome, is it?"
 "Dat's makin' me grey-headed, Shanky."
 "Oh, I understand. But I guess you'll come across one before we get to St. Louis; if not, we'll take a tack and go east again."

This was all that passed between them, but it set Shanks to thinking. If the want of a daddy racket was all that troubled him, he thought he could accommodate him.

But that very night something happened that knocked 'lonesome' out of him quite effectually, and kept it out for several days.

The performance had just begun and everybody behind the scenes was busy.

Shorty was in his dressing-room, about half dress-

"Divil a drop ther day."
 "Well, will yer take a 'drop' now?"
 "Faix I will," said she, misunderstanding Shorty's slang.
 He was mad as blazes, anyway, but he had to laugh at this in spite of himself.
 "Sure it's no more nor right that mother an' son should have a drop together."
 "Will you take a tumble?"
 "Fut for? Sure, I'm a dacent woman."
 "Decently full. Will you 'waltz' out of here?"
 "Troth, I don't understand the new-fangled dances, but I'll give yees as nate a step of Irish jig or reel as iver ye seen. But I can't waltz."
 "Can you take a jig step?"
 "I can."

der black side?" said he, laughing and looking in the glass at his half-blackened mug.
 "Ther white wan, of course. Yer don't think yer father was a nagur, do ye?" she asked, indignantly.
 "Well, I can't swear ter dat."
 "Well, I can, then. An' he war a sort av a play actor chap himself, so he was."
 "Yer don't tell me so."
 "It's true for me. He cud sing like a burd, an' dance like a fairy."
 "An' his name was O'Hoolerhan, hey?"
 "Yer right it was, Dennis O'Hoolerhan."
 "Has der ole man chipped in?"
 "Has he what?"
 "Chipped in."
 "How's that?"



The scene shifters were running off the flats, so that Shorty, half made up, eagerly pursued by the little old woman and Shorty, Jr., were in full view.

ed and only partially blacked up, when a little dumpling of a fat Irish woman opened the door.

How she ever got in at the stage-door nobody seemed to know, but there she was, and in prowling around she opened Shorty's door.

He happened to be standing back to her at the moment, and didn't observe her as she stuck her head into the room. But she wasn't that kind of a cat to allow anybody to remain in ignorance of her presence.

"Hilloe! is Sharty here?" she called.

"Yes. Who the devil are you?" he asked, turning suddenly around.

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"Sure, that's a nice way for yees ter be spakin' ter yer mother."

"My what?"

"Yer own mother, Bridget O'Hoolerhan," said she, going into the little room.

"Git out. What'er yer givin' me?"

"The Virgin Mary's truth."

"Oh, git out; yer budgy."

"Buggy, is it?" she asked, indignantly. "Sure, there isn't a dacent woman in America nor I am, if it's me that says it."

"Well, dat's all right; but what brought yer here?" he asked, impatiently.

"Me two futs."

"But how did yer get in at der stage-door?"

"Troth, I walked through it."

"Well, now turn an' walk der other way, an' don't stop 'til I send yer word."

"Divil a bit of it," said she, decidedly.

"But what ther blazes der yer want?"

"Yon."

"Me?"

"Me cheild!"

"Go ter der devil. Ther idea of yer bein' my mother. I tells yer, dat yer drunk."

"Well, take a running one, and point yerself at der door."

"I won't."

"Then I'll have yer fired out."

"Now, isn't that a nice way to trate yer poor ould mother?"

"Nonsense!"

"Divil a bit of nonsense at all—at all."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Didn't I read the thing on one of yer bills, that yees war a-lookin' for yer dad?"

"Well, yer aren't my dad, be yer."

"No; but I'm sure, that I'm your mother, so I am."

Shorty laughed in spite of himself. The idea of that little old Irish woman being his mother. But she appeared to be comical enough to be the mother of half a dozen Shortys.

"Well, what makes yer think so, ole gal?" he asked, finally.

"Sure, wasn't ye stolen from me by the hathenish gipsies?" said she.

"Oh, I was, eh?"

"Yes, ye war; I knowed ye the minit I set eyes on ye, so I did."

"Oh, yer did, eh?"

"Sure, 'twas ther voice of nater that tould me ye was me long-lost b'y."

"Where did this stealin' take place?"

"In ould Ireland."

Shorty roared.

"County Down, so it was, bad luck ter the thievin' spalpeens."

"How long ago did this little thing occur?"

"Thirty years last St. Patrick's day, when ye war a kid."

"Get out wid yer nonsense."

"Oh, sure I know it's so. I see yer poor father's looks in yer very face."

"Which side looks like der ole man, der white or

"Has he shuffled off?"

"Troth, he could shuffle as well as the best dancer in Ireland," said she, again misunderstanding Shorty's slang.

"I mean, has he pegged out?"

"He was not a shoemaker."

"I mean, is he dead?"

"He is, Lord rest his sowl in Hiven."

"Dat's too bad. Then I'll never see him, eh?" said Shorty, keeping up the chaffing.

"No, poor b'y, ye'll niver see him. Oh, he was a dacent man about me own size."

"Yer don't tell me so. What made him croak?"

"Made him croak! Sure, I niver heard him do such a thing in me life," said she, in open-eyed astonishment.

"What was it dat yanked him out?"

"Begorra, he was never yanked in his life. He cud foight loike the devil."

"He could, hey? Well, what I'm tryin' ter get at, is, what made him die?"

"Och, is that what he mane? But what a quare way ye have av spakin'. Sure he doid av runnin' agin a stick, so he did," said she, frankly.

"The devil you say! What sort of a stick?"

"A bit av blackthorn."

"How did it happen?"

"Faix, he an' Tom McCarty were havin' a bit av a ruction, an' Tom whacked him on the sconce, bad luck ter him, an' made a widdy av me, so he did."

"So der ole man was a fighter, eh?"

"He was that."

"Well, have you got through?"

"Through what?"

"Wid yer yarn?"

"Mostly."

"All right, then git out, for I want ter dress," said he, pointing to the door.

"Out!"

"Yes. Bounce."

"What a pity her legs hadn't been a little longer," suggested Shanks.

"New if she had been 'Shanks' mare, we might have had some fun."

They all turned and looked in astonishment at Kennedy, who made the above remark. This was a trick of the gang which they almost always played, whenever Harry attempted anything in the shape of a joke, and then, without another word, they all marched out of the theater.

But Mrs. O'Hooleran was waiting for Shorty (or "Teddy," as they called him for a long time after that), and the moment he made his appearance, she went for him.

"Ah, ha! Now I have ye, Teddy, darlint," she exclaimed, catching him up in her arms and attempting to kiss him; but they both tumbled into the gutter, where they rolled, fought, yelled and kicked, until a policeman came upon the scene.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HALLOO, here, what's this row?" demanded the policeman, seizing Shorty by the seat of his pants and tearing him from the embrace of Mrs. O'Hooleran.

They were fighting and clawing each other as they rolled over and over in the gutter in front of the stage door. The reader, of course, understands who she was and how they happened to be in this predicament.

"Arrest dat woman!" exclaimed Shorty.

"No, he won't, then; he'll arrest yees for batin' me in the gutter," said the little old woman, getting upon her feet. "He's my son, so he is, bad manners ter him for batin' me."

The officer stood Shorty on his feet.

"I'll take you both in," said he.

"I say, cop, that's all right," said Billy Barry, coming to the rescue.

"Stand back! The first man that interferes with me in the discharge of my duty I will club into mush!" roared the officer, flourishing his club.

"But you want to do the square thing, don't you?" asked Gus Williams.

"Yes, I intend to do the square thing all 'round."

"Well, you are doing it all wrong if you arrest him."

"Yes, that old woman attacked him as he was coming out of the stage door," said Shanks.

"Shut up, all of you! I am an officer of the peace. I saw these two fighting here, and it is my duty to take them both in," he roared, "and I intend to do it!"

"But if you saw a robber attack a man, would you take the victim in?"

"Yes, I would; and if you don't shut up, I'll take the whole lot of you in."

"I say, cop, this ole hen has been after me all der evenin', an' we fired her out of der stage door only a little while ago," said Shorty.

"So he did, bad manners ter him, though he is me own—"

"Shut up! Come along," he said, seizing her by the arm.

He was holding Shorty in his grip all the while.

"I'll see yez darned fust!" said she, shaking herself free from his grasp.

"Go it, ole gal!" yelled Shorty, Jr.

"Cheese it!" said Billy Barry.

The old woman darted across the street, the policeman after her, dragging Shorty along with him.

But the old gal was full of fight, and instead of running away, she stood her ground and put up her hands for a box with him.

The gang followed, of course.

"Lemme be!" yelled Shorty.

"Surrender, or I'll club you!" said the officer.

"Club an' be darned!"

He attempted to arrest her again, but in doing so, he lost his grip on Shorty, who ran down the street as fast as his two legs would carry him.

A crowd had gathered by this time, and thinking Shorty the most valuable of the two, as most likely to pay well for his liberty, the officer ran after him.

But he had scarcely taken ten steps when Shorty, Jr., threw himself between his legs, and he went sprawling upon the sidewalk, while the Kid was up and away before the officer could recover himself.

Utterly dazed and bewildered, he started to run in an opposite direction, and the first person he came upon was Mrs. O'Hooleran, and he at once laid violent hands on her, while the other members of the company scattered and got out of harm's way.

"Ah! I have you at all events," said he.

"Have ye, then?" she cried, butting him in the bread basket, and sending him back upon the broad basement of his pantaloons with a "ough!" that might have been heard a block away.

She knocked the wind nearly out of him, and it was some moments before he could regain his feet, during which she took leg bail, and got out of that neighborhood, and the crowd jeered and laughed at the crestfallen and back-fallen policeman to their hearts' content.

But somebody had got to be arrested, and in his rage, he seized upon the first one he could reach after feeling sure of his wind, and it happened to be a sober citizen who was passing and simply stopped to see what the row was about.

"Come along, you Thug, come along! I have got my grippers on you now!" he roared, seizing the man by the coat collar.

"But, sir, you have made a mistake," said the unoffending man, resisting arrest.

"Don't you dare to talk back at me, sir. I am an officer, and know my duty."

"You don't know B from a bull's foot if you arrest me. I was a simple spectator."

"Shut up! I know you. Come along."

"All right. I'll go."

"You'd better, for it's the healthiest thing you can do," said the enraged policeman.

"We'll see whether it is the healthiest thing for you or not," replied the man, accompanying him.

"No talk back!" and he flourished his club at the surging crowd which began to follow.

"You're an ass!" yelled somebody, and the general shout that followed, was convincing proof that it was the general opinion.

But he was bound to arrest somebody, and the crowd followed to see how the thing would result.

It was only a little distance to the station-house, and the officer tightened his grip as he neared it, evidently fearing a rescue.

Arriving there, he marched his unresisting prisoner up before his superior officer.

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" demanded the officer, looking from the prisoner to the policeman.

"A prisoner, for inciting a riot and preventing the arrest of guilty parties," said he, pompously.

"How is this—do you know that you have arrested the mayor?"

"The what?" breathed the policeman, growing suddenly very white, with a weakness in the knees.

"How is this, your honor?" asked the superior officer.

"Well, sir, I saw a disturbance down back of the theater, and stopped to see what it was about, when this booby, whom somebody had knocked down, regained his feet and arrested me," said the mayor, whom everybody now recognized.

"Clubber, you are a fool!"

"Yes, too big a one to be on the force. Strip his shield and uniform from him," said the mayor.

"I—I beg pardon, sir, I—"

"You are a fool, but you shall never disgrace our force again."

"But I didn't know it was you, sir."

"It makes no difference. Where are the prisoners you attempted to arrest?"

"They escaped, sir, and I—"

"You seized the first person you met without stopping to think or care who or what he was. You are a disgrace to the force, sir. Off with his uniform and put a sensible man in his place," said the mayor, turning and going from the room, followed by the shouts of those who had assembled there.

Was Clubber sick?

Well, slightly.

And it didn't hurt his feelings a bit to have the officers and citizens tell him that he was an ass or a fool. He had a corresponding idea himself.

But that ended Shorty's trouble with Mrs. O'Hooleran, for she did not show up after that, evidently concluding, either that she had made a mistake, or that a son who was so hard to be convinced was not worth having.

The gang, however, was not disposed to let up on him quite so easily.

He succeeded in reaching his hotel in safety, but badly out of breath, and in the course of ten minutes the other fellows came in, and amid much laughter, recounted the ending of the affair, as two or three of them had followed in the crowd that went to the station-house.

It was a comical affair with a comical ending, and they all had a good laugh over it.

"Dat serves der duffer right," said Shorty.

"Yes; but how about your mother?" asked Kennedy.

"Yes; your poor old mother?" added Gus Williams.

"My poor old grandmother!" put in Shorty, Jr.

"Teddy, you were hard on her," said Barry.

"Oh, dat's all right. You duffs wants a brace," replied Shorty, laughing grimly.

"Of course we don't mind a brace."

"Oh, no; we'll brace, if you say so."

"By all means let us brace."

"Yes, yer'll em-brace every offer, I'll bet. Well, der 'beers is on Simon' dis time, I guess."

"On Teddy, rather."

"Oh, come along, an' give dat Teddy snap a rest," said Shorty, leading the way to the beer fountain.

Gus Williams was always good at impromptu songs, and as they stood before the bar he composed, and sang as he made it up, the following, to the tune of "Such an Education has My Mary Ann!"

"Oh, my Shorty, he's a joker,
But he sometimes gets the 'down.'
You should see him when he's looking for his dad,
He'll sometimes treat so humble,
When he has to take a tumble,
Or when a Biddy claims to be his dad;
We saw him in the gutter,
We heard him swear and splutter,
When a big policeman raised him like a tad;
When a woman swears that she's it,
You should see old Shorty cheese it,
For he won't have a petticoated 'dad.'

Chorus.

"He's a darling, he's a daisy,
He's a dumpling, he's a clam,
You should see him skip, when he gets the tip,
Such a runner is our little Teddy man!"

The gang seemed to know what the chorus was to be, and they sang it with a vim that made the bar-room and corridors ring again.

Of course a laugh followed.

Shorty grinned a hard grin and joined in it, but it was quite evident that he wasn't half so tickled as he pretended to be.

"Dat's all right, boys, I's shoutin'. What'll yer drown yerselves in?" said he.

"Beer is good enough for me," said Gus.

"Yes, I'll take beer. I'm not proud, if I don't know where my dad is," said Billy Barry, and then they repeated the chorus.

The whole thing ended in uproarious fun, and the next night being the last in Cincinnati, the house was packed, for hundreds had heard of it, through the medium of the *Saturday Night*, one of the brightest papers in the west, and edited by one of the most princely good fellows.

Well, from Cincinnati they went to Chicago, where they were also well known, and where good business presented itself at once, for the "Adelphia" was packed the first night, and the satisfaction so good that it was safe to bet on a week of just such houses, although other companies had been there ahead of them, including Tony Pastor's, that scarcely paid expenses.

But Shanks was always on the look out, and whenever he saw a chance to make a hit, he was the man for the occasion.

So after playing three nights with only the ordinary amount of advertising, and seeing the third night's house drop off a little, he went to work to get up a street show and advertising snap that he thought would "stir 'em up again."

Procuring a big wagon with four fine horses, he had it fixed up in flaming style with banners, signs and streamers, and then he required every male member of the company to dress himself for some part and be ready at the theater that afternoon.

At three o'clock the whole company got into their conveyance and Shorty took the reins.

It was rather a stylish turn out, and the boys liked the idea, as it would give them a chance to see the city and have some fun.

A great crowd gathered to see them start, and the excitement over the novelty of the thing ran high.

"Whoa, Emma!" said Shorty, taking the reins.

"Be you duffs all ready?"

"Yes, let her rip!" said Shanks.

"G'lang!"

The horses started off handsomely and the company began to show off, some in one way and some in another, all the while throwing out bills of the performance.

"Three cheers for Shorty!" roared a little fellow on the sidewalk, and the way they were given showed that he was a favorite in Chicago.

Their course through the city was the source of much amusement, and crowds ran after the turn out to get a sight at the renowned Shorty.

The house that night showed the wisdom of the movement, for it was packed, and after unpacking the people went home perfectly satisfied that they had had their money's worth. Taking it all in all, they never had a better week's business than they had in the splendid city of Chicago.

And in consideration of this, and in honor of the many good friends they had there, Shorty had the entire company assemble on the stage for the last part, where a travesty on "Nancy Lee," arranged by Gus Williams, was sung as a grand wind-up to the week's business.

I have a copy of the song before me as I write, and as "Nancy Lee" is still a very popular song all over the country, I will give some of it as the company gave it on that occasion:

Of all the towns as'er you know,
Yeo ho! lads! ho! yeo ho—yeo ho!
There's none that can beat this, I trow,
Yeo ho! lads! ho! yeo ho!
See here she sits and claps her hands for you
and me,
And every day when we're away she'll watch
to see;
And whisper slow when others "blow" for
Shorty, oh,
Yeo ho! lads! ho! yeo ho!

Chorus.

Chicago's hands the actor's life shall be,
Yeo ho! we go to Milwaukee;
Chicago's hands the actor's life shall be,
Chicago's hands his life shall be!

Unless a person is acquainted with the music of this ballad, but a faint idea can be had by reading the words of what the effect was when sung by a dozen trained voices with all the action thrown in.

The effect was electric, and three times three cheers were given at the end of each verse.

There are two more verses, but as it would take up too much space I will not give them.

But when the curtain went down finally, there were loud calls for Shorty, and they were so earnest that some notice had to be taken of them.

"What shall I say?" he asked, of Gus Williams.

"Go out and tell them your name's Teddy O'Hooleran," said he, laughing.

"Tell 'em you're a horse, and can't be heard," suggested Billy Barry.

"No; tell them you're only one, be a herd," suggested Harry Kennedy, attempting a pun.

"If somebody'll choke Kennedy, I'll go out anyway," said he, pushing the curtain aside, and wading before the footlights.

A perfect storm of applause greeted him.

"Speech—speech!" was the call.

"Ladies and gents," he began, imitating Forrest in his character of *Metamora*, "yer've sent for me, an' I've come; if yer don't want me, I'll go an' keep my wig warm."

"Go it—go it! Good boy!"

"Keep it warm!" and a dozen other cries greeted him from all sides.

"I don't know what else I can say. I'm like Gus Williams; I'm chuck full—only mine's emotion."

A loud laugh greeted this, for he and Gus had had "hits" at each other several times during the week, while doing their turns, and the crowd saw the point.

"I'm very emotioned over yer duckets, an' the applause yer've slung at me, an' if St. Louis don't do as well, I'll tell 'em ter der teeth dat they haven't got so many inhabitants as Chicago by ten, and dat'll make 'em sick, I know. Don't forget us, an' sometime we'll come back an' give yer some worse jokes den we've given dis time. I'll even let Harry Kennedy say some funny things for yer, if yer won't kill him on my hands. An' if Gus Williams gets up a new joke, I'll come right back here an' let him say it, if I'm a thousand miles away, for I know it would startle der town."

He retired amid laughter and applause, and as Gus was a favorite there, and as it would only be fair to give him a chance to speak for himself, a grand call was made for him, and he responded.

"Ladies and gentlemen: Shorty has got the start of me; but that is nothing. He got the start of a policeman the other night. (laughter). He is rather disappointed at not finding his dad. He expected to find him in Cincinnati, but the best of them had been killed and salted down before we arrived there, and he is still looking. But, to be serious, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the kind applause you have bestowed upon meduring my stay here, and rest assured that I shall always cherish the many friends I have made in Chicago, wherever my business may call me."

Applause followed him as he passed out of sight behind the curtain, and the audience left the opera house, laughing, and fully convinced that he was at last even with the little joker who had enjoyed the first "say."

On their return to their hotel they found a large number of people there with whom they were all more or less acquainted, and jokes and gibes flew thick and fast as they stood before the bar to "wet" their week's success.

Gus Williams was telling stories, as usual, when a big Hoosier, at least six feet six, and as large in proportion, reeled into the room. He was slightly under the influence of "bug juice," although he seemed to be good-natured.

Yet he was far from being so. He wore a smile, but was looking for a fight.

"Whoop!" he yelled. "Has anybody got a five-year-old boy here? I want ter be licked; I can't fight a cent's worth, an' I'm spilin' ter be licked."

They all turned to look at him, although those in his immediate locality made a hasty change of base, in order to get out of the way, for fear he might mistake them for "children," and insist upon being "licked."

"My name's Fluff, an' a mud turtle licked me one day! I can't fight; it arn't in me, but I want ter be licked. I don't want ter be pounded all ter pieces, so I call for a boy. Got one?"

"Here's one," said a man, pushing Shorty, Jr., toward him.

"No; he's too big. He'd break me all up. I want a boy, a child, an' if I can't get one, I'll have ter take a sick sheep. I arn't a bit bad!" he exclaimed, approaching the bar, and striking it with his heavy fist.

The jarring of his blow upset a tumbler of liquor belonging to a little fellow who stood at the bar, and he at once turned upon him.

People who stood near expected to see him get swallowed the first thing.

"Guess that must be your dad, Shorty," whispered Gus.

"In—dad it isn't," said he.

"I say, stranger, you've upset my whiskey," said the little man.

"Oh, did I? Then it must be spilled, eh?" said the giant, carelessly.

"Well, I should say so. Are you going to pay for having it filled again?"

"Oh, I pay for everything. My name's Fluff, an' I can't fight for a cent's worth," he roared.

"Will you pay for that whiskey?"

"Oh, get me down on der floor, an' cram my head in a spittoon. I'm meek; I can't fight Mary's little lamb," he said, with a swagger.

The next thing that big bully knew, he was sprawling on the floor and that little fellow was on top of him, pegging away at his mug as though he was a shoemaker.

He tried to get up, and did some swearing as tall as he was himself, but that little fellow was too agile for him and kept on top all the time.

Presently he cried:

"Enough!" and with a parting blow the little fellow allowed him to get up.

"Will you pay for that whiskey?" he demanded.

"I pays for everything. Set 'em up!" said he.

A derisive shout greeted him as he looked around.

"Oh, that's all right. I told yer I couldn't fight. All I wanted was ter be licked."

"Well, are you satisfied? If you arn't, I'll take a turn at you," said Shorty, swaggering up to him with his fists doubled up.

This, of course, created another laugh, for Shorty wasn't much longer than the bully's legs.

"Oh, I'm satisfied. I'm no hog. I know when I've got enough. I told yer I couldn't fight. Set 'em up for the house, landlord."

"Give me a piece of him," said Shorty, Jr., doubling his little fists and squaring off at the bully.

Another laugh at his expense.

"Go for him!" said some one.

"You can get away with him, little one!"

"Of course I can," replied the Kid.

"Gents, I'm satisfied. I've come a hundred miles just ter get licked. I'm happy ter say that I've been

accommodated. What'll yer have?" he added, showing a roll of bills.

"Yer a good talker, but that's the best I've heard yer squeal ter night. I'll take a bottle," said Shorty, turning to the barkeeper.

"Everybody call for what they want, I'm soaped ter pay," and pay he had to, for everybody in the place called for the most expensive drink that was to be had, and after paying for them that blower fired himself out and vanished, receiving the grand laugh as he did so.

The gang and its friends had a good time that night in Chicago, and it was "five o'clock in the morning" before they were all in bed, dreaming of the next place they were to visit, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was not a big leap from Chicago to Milwaukee, but as the show business ran at that time, it was deemed best to do that city next.

And so the next day they embarked on the Chicago and Milwaukee railroad, receiving a lively send-off from about twenty of their personal friends, who had assembled at the depot, including several "professionals," who were either there by chance at the time, or were playing at some of the regular theaters.

Among them was Harry Kernell, the celebrated Irish comedian, who was acquainted with every member of Shorty's troupe, including the "boss."

"Well, take care of yourself, Col. Goshen," said he, reaching down and shaking hands with Shorty.

This caused some merriment, for it will be remembered that Col. Goshen is Barnum's giant.

"All right, Frenchy, I'll try ter: but I's got a bad gang here," replied Shorty, referring to his company.

"Yes, bold, bad men, all of 'em."

"Bad men? Bad actors, you mean," said Harry Kennedy.

"No. I's only got one bad one, an' he's a perfumed ventriloquist," said Shorty.

That settled Kennedy, and he retired into the waiting car amid a loud laugh.

"Good-by; remember us to the boys up in Milwaukee," said Tony Hart, waving his hand to several of the gang who were already seated, and were looking out of the car windows.

"All right; ta-tal!" was the reply; and after a final hand shake, the others got on board, and the train soon steamed out of the depot with its merry freight, leaving behind one almost as merry.

They had heaps of fun during the passage, and cut all sorts of pranks with each other, although it happened that Harry Kennedy was so seated that he could afford the most, and this is how it happened:

The car was full of mixed people, as all railway cars are, and directly above his head, in one of the bundle-racks, was what looked for all the world like an innocent and ordinary shawl, bound by a traveling-strap.

Harry saw this tucked up there, and at once made up his mind to have some fun with it by the aid of his ventriloquism.

So, at the first station where the cars stopped, he began to imitate a crying baby, and making the voice seem to come from the bundle, and as though the babe was half smothered.

The passengers began to look around to see where the noise came from, but seeing no one in the car who had a child, they were puzzled to account for it.

Finally, just as the train started again, Harry glanced up at the bundle in the shawl-strap, with a troubled look of inquiry on his face, and instantly everybody else looked up, too.

But the noise of the train soon drowned the wail of the supposed baby, and so one by one the passengers settled back into their seats again, although you could tell by the expression on their faces, as they conversed with each other and either pointed or looked toward the suspicious bundle, that they suspected that something about it was wrong.

And Harry helped the thing along from time to time, before the next station was reached, by occasionally looking up, as though listening, or as though he still heard the cry.

But two or three of the "gang" had tumbled, although they were always ready for a ventriloquial racket by Harry; but it soon got noised about among them, so they were ready for it by the time the next station was reached.

And as the speed of the train slackened, and consequently the noise, the wail of the supposed child began to be heard again.

Several of the passengers leaped to their feet.

There was a rough old hoosier sitting next to the aisle in the seat with Harry, but he was sound asleep, and knew nothing of what was going on.

"Say, halloo! What's in that bundle up there in the rack?" shouted one.

"It's a baby!" screamed another, whereat every female in the car felt in duty bound to say: "Oh, my!" and then to give a little squeak.

"Whose bundle is it?"

"Shame—shame!"

"Take it down!"

"Poor innocent!"

"Call the conductor!"

"Yes, call the conductor; it's his duty to look after such things," and one man made a dive for the next car, where he was supposed to be.

Meantime one very officious man, conceiving that the tortured babe belonged to the sleeping hoosier, seized him roughly by the shoulder and attempted to arouse him to a sense of his cruelty and shame, while Harry kept up the crying.

The hoosier didn't arouse to a sense of shame a bit's worth, but he did arouse, however, and quicker than the lightning from a mule's leg, he gave the man a "rousing" bang on the side of his nut, that sent him sprawling over on top of half-a-dozen passengers.

"Don't yer cum fulin' 'round me thinkin' ter rot me, if I am a-snoozin', or I'll be rank pizen for ye mind that," said he, savagely.

"Shame—shame!" cried a dozen voices.

"Shame—shame!"

"What for?"

"The child."

"The dear babe."

"Babe! Call him a babe?"

"No, the babe up there in the rack," said other voices.

"Oh, git out; yer all drunk or crazy, but don't forget yerselves an' come playin' any of yer tomfoolery 'round me, that's all," and again he sank into his seat just as the train started, and the conductor appeared.

The moment he entered the car, nearly everybody in it began shouting to him, and pointing to the suspicious bundle, the noise from which was by this time entirely drowned.

That indignant hoosier thought they were pointing and calling attention to him.

He was on his feet again in an instant, with a pair of doubled-up fists that were as large as a shoulder of mutton.

"It's a bed-bug lie, conductor!" he roared.

"No—no!" screamed fifty.

"I tell you I was asleep right here in my seat, when one of them poxy smart sneaks tried to play somethin' on me, an' I lammed him; wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps so, but what is it I hear about a baby being confined in a bundle up here in the rack?" asked the conductor.

"What baby?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Yes—yes. You are a murderer," said several.

Shorty and the gang were taking it all in by this time, and helping it along.

"I don't know what in thunder you mean," and the rough old hoosier looked wildly around.

"Does that bundle belong to you, sir," the conductor asked of Kennedy, who seemed even more excited than any of them, but apparently afraid to touch the bundle into which he had conveyed sounds.

"No, sir, the bundle was there when I took my seat here," he replied, earnestly.

The train was making so much noise that the passengers gathered eagerly around to listen.

"Does it belong to you?" he asked, of the hoosier.

"Me? Du I look like a hoss that makes yer think carry a blanket? No, sir-ee; I've got all my fixin' on my back an' in my duds."

"Well, who does it belong to?"

"Shame—shame! the poor little innocent, it may be dying. Take it down!" cried several women, wringing their hands in the old-fashioned way, (the way the used to before the invention of wringing machines.)

"Yes—yes!" from others, encouraged the conductor to reach up and take down the rolled shawl in the shawl strap.

It was so very light that he hesitated and "hefted" it two or three times by the handles.

"There isn't anything like a baby here," he said, looking around.

"Yes, there is; we all heard it cry."

"To be sure we did," said the officious fellow, who shook the hoosier's fist so suddenly.

He had just then gotten himself together.

To satisfy the clamor, the conductor proceeded to open the bundle, while the crowd pressed closely around, and the women all squealed, so much sympathy have they—for other folk's children.

Before he got it fairly unstrapped the train drew up at the station.

But when he came to unroll the shawl, of course there was no no wailing infant there, and blank astonishment saddled itself upon everybody's mug. What the dickens did it mean?

Out of the center of the bundle the conductor took a large card, on which was printed "Shorty's Varieties," in large letters.

She gang understood it, then. The shawl belonged to one of the lady performers of the troupe who was seated in another car, and had been placed there by mistake.

And then such a shout as Shorty and his company sent up effectually startled the people around the station and in the car.

And yet they couldn't get the hang of it altogether—what had become of the babe?

They made it a theme of conversation all the way to Milwaukee, while the gang laughed among themselves, or got strangers, who asked them questions, upon all sorts of strings about the matter.

"Who is this Shorty they're talking about?" asked a long, lean, lank westerner, who occupied a seat in front of Shorty and the Kid.

He had turned around to face them.

"What! never heard about Shorty?"

"Darned if ever I did."

"Well, neither did I. I guess it's only a joke," replied Shorty, indifferently.

"I know who he is," said Shorty, junior.

"Who is he?"

"You've heard 'bout Barnum's giant?"

"Oh, yes; seen him last summer."

"Well, Col. Goshen is his summer name when he travels wid der 'biggest show on earth,' but Shorty's winter name when he goes out for himself."

"Pshaw! yer don't say so!"

"Dat's der way I whistles it, boss," replied the

the mischievous Kid, looking as sober as a dishonest scale.

"Waal, I swanny!"

"He's goin' ter give a show up ter 'waukee, commencing to-morrow night. Go see him."

"Don't forget that I will, sonny, for it must be right lown funny," said the westerner.

"Yes, right up and down funny. Want yer buttons sewed on with India rubber thread, or yer'll bust them off."

"Great snakes! yer don't say so. Ever seen him yerself?"

"Oh, several times!"

"By hokey, I'll take it in!"

That settled him, and he proceeded to tell the discovery to a friend of his, who occupied a seat in front of him.

So, taking it all in, the joke not only afforded them all the fun they wanted for the time being, but proved a first-class advertisement as well. In fact, on account of the jokes of Shorty and his company, there never had to be half the advertising done that other companies were obliged to do, because so many of their jokes and rackets got into the papers.

But even when the train arrived at Milwaukee those passengers were still in doubt and anxiety, although the conductor had tumbled to it, on account of the owner of the shawl having inquired of him about it, and he in turn making several inquiries, which resulted about the same as giving the joke away.

Well, their first night in Milwaukee was signalized by a pretty good house, although "Dar's room fo' many mo'," as Shorty said, when he looked through the peep-hole in the curtain.

But those who were there went away in the best of spirits and fully satisfied. The next day, however, the story of the baby in the shawl, as told by the conductor—who enjoyed it as much as anybody—was published in the *Sentinel*, and created a ripple of merriment all over town, so that the house was packed in every part the second night.

In Milwaukee there is a branch of "The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," and it has given several companies of showmen much trouble by arresting the managers for employing children in their shows.

Gus Williams and Billy Barry thought they could have some fun at their expense, and so wrote a letter to the president (signed with a fictitious name) informing him that Shorty was only a child, and that the acts which his manager, Shanks, had forced him into, had not only stunted his growth, but had caused him to become prematurely old; and called upon him in the name of humanity to arrest this cruel manager and this tortured boy, and let justice be done, though the heavens fall.

That was enough. The society hadn't had a case in a long while, and people were laughing and asking what it was good for, anyhow. So that pompous president sent an officer to the hotel the next day, and dragged the two culprits before a police justice, although what the devil it all meant, unless it was a joke, which they strongly suspected, they could not tell.

Court was instantly convened, and the "tortured boy" placed before it for examination. When the complaint was read they both understood it, and had a good laugh to themselves over the matter.

But it was no laughing matter to that president.

Every member of the company was present in the court-room, as well as a hundred other curious spectators, all anxious to see how the case of cruelty to children would turn out.

Shorty was called before the judge. An officer of the court placed a chair for him to stand up on so that he and the judge could see each other.

"Are you the person known as Shorty?" asked the judge.

"Dat's me, judge."

"What is your real name?"

"Shorty, fust, last an' always, judge."

"Have you no other name?"

"None dat I know on; but I's tryin' ter find my dad now, ter see if I have another. Why—what's der matter, judge?"

"How old are you?"

"'Bout forty."

"What?" exclaimed the court.

"Can't tell ter a day or two, judge, for I was found, an' don't know how old I was then. But as near as I can make it, I's near forty."

"How long have you been on the stage?"

"'Bout twenty years."

That president was beginning to look sick.

"Why, judge, der yer see dat kid over dere? He's my kid; he's Shorty, junior," said he, laughing.

"Well, I am astonished," said the court, leaning back and laughing.

"Guess yer will be, if yer take me fer a chicken; why, I's been all over der world."

"What have you to say about this?" asked the court, turning to the sick "President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children."

"I—I—well, your honor, I wasn't aware of his age; but I received a letter from some of our citizens, stating that he was child, and was being cruelly treated."

A loud laugh followed this announcement, which the court joined in, even while rapping with its authoritative gravel for order, and it made that president even sicker yet, which Shorty and Shanks both enjoyed hugely.

"Mr. Shanks, you are discharged," said the judge, waving his hand, "and," he added, turning to the president, "be good enough to investigate your cases a little closer, before you bring them before me hereafter."

The sick president bowed, grinned, and sloped.

"Judge, come an' see me ter-night," said Shorty, handing him half a dozen tickets.

"Thank you, I will do so, and I am sorry that this stupid piece of business should have ever taken place," replied the judge.

"Oh, dat's all right, judge, I'se used ter it. I was scooped in once before in New York, an' once in Boston."

"Indeed."

"Yes, but they dropped me."

"I guess they would have to," said the judge.

This settled the business, and after thanking the judge again, the gang took its departure. But both Shorty and Shanks suspected that the job had been put up by some of the company, and they, of course, resolved to find out who it was.

But there was a grand laugh over it, and while the public was enjoying the fun they all made on the stage, they in turn were enjoying fun which they extracted from the public.

That night there was another good house, and Shorty had prepared himself for extra fun, knowing that a great many who would visit the show had heard of the arrest.

Nearly every one of the performers during their acts had something to say about the "abused child," and a shot or two at the President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Every one of these shots told, and what made them more effectual was, the president himself was present, trying to enjoy the performance.

Finally when Shorty and the Kid came out for the first of their acts, there was a perfect roar of applause to greet them.

On this occasion their first part was a song and dance, blacked, Shorty would play the banjo for the Kid—whom he pretended he was trying to learn the art of dancing—to dance, and then they would have a wrangle, and the Kid would take the banjo and play for Shorty to shake 'er down.

It was a very pretty and comical act, the way they played it, and always brought down the house, and on their recall they performed a banjo duet, the Kid on his little and Shorty on his larger banjo, and this was a snap which always took.

But the third call Shorty came out alone, as he usually did, for he generally had more or less chaff with the audience which he could get better along with alone.

He came out with his old, but good, banjo, dragging a chair along behind him.

"I say, aren't this a nice way ter treat a poor over-worked boy, hey, what der yer say? Bimeby der president for der prevention of making big fools of demselves will be after you."

This shot also hit the bull's-eye.

Shorty sat down and began to rattle away on his banjo, and he knocked music out of it by the square yard for about two minutes, when he gradually came down to an accompaniment and started to sing:

"A 'president' there was in Milwaukee,

Who was ever so 'fresh' and so talky,

We gave him a 'raise'

For the rest of his days.

This 'president' fresh of Milwaukee."

"Good—good! Give us some more!" came from all over the theater.

"Nix; we'll give der duffer a rest now," said Shorty, still playing away on his banjo.

And then he struck another verse:

"There was a sweet youth from Chicago,

Who spent all his time playing bance,

But der cops wasn't fooled,

And at last he got 'pulled,'

And they 'sent up' this lad from Chicago."

As this had direct allusion to an actual occurrence a few days before in Milwaukee, it took, and brought down the house.

"Now I don't mind telling you this:

I once knew a man in St. Louis,

He would 'hang' every drink—

Now what der yer think?

They hung up this man from St. Louis.

"There was an old Mick in Detroit,

Who used to steal hens every 'noight,'

But they gave him a boost,

Where the State keeps a 'roost'

For such as this Mick from Detroit.

"I'll say der's a town I was once in,

Dat's in der State of Wisconsin,

Where allus yer fun

Pans out ton for ton,

In dis town of Milwaukee, Wisconsin."

A fresh outburst greeted him as he finished this extempore song, and after he had retired there was another call, which he reluctantly responded to—for by this time he was tired—and made them a little speech as the finisher to the evening's entertainment.

"Ladies and gents:—I haven't had so much fun since I had my tooth pulled, but I's as much obliged ter yer as if yer'd pulled every tooth-maker an' bean-breaker in my head. I hope yer'll have a chance sometime ter pull some more of 'em in der same way; until then, be good ter yerselves. Also be good ter der babies, and believe yours truly, Shorty," said he, kissing his hand, and retiring amid applause.

CHAPTER XIX.

FROM Milwaukee, Shorty and his company went to Dubuque, Davenport, Burlington, Springfield, Quincy, and so on southward to St. Louis, where they

were billed to play Christmas week at De Bar's Opera House.

At the most of these places they had only played for a night or two, and as the weather was very cold, there was but little disposition manifested on the part of our friends to indulge in any rackets, their time being fully occupied in attending to business and in keeping warm.

In this latter part they were not all entirely successful, as several of them got portions of their anatomy frost-bitten. Gus Williams had his nose frozen, and Harry Kennedy had the upper section of his ears bitten pretty badly.

These little mishaps—these kind attentions of Jack Frost—created considerable amusement for the party, although not much, if any, for the fellows who were "bitten." Shorty was especially uproarious and full of fun.

"Dat's all right, Kennedy," said he. "Yer can 'ford ter lose der upper part of yer ears."

"I can!" exclaimed the ventriloquist.

"Yes, for den you'll have bigger ones den any oder performer's got."

"But only think how he'll miss 'em in the summer time," suggested Billy Barry.

"How so?"

"He can't fan himself with 'em any more."

This produced a loud laugh at Kennedy's expense, and he acknowledged the corn.

"But how about Gus Williams' nose?"

"Oh, he knows all about that," said Kennedy.

"Shoot him!" cried half a dozen.

"Brain him!"

"Oh, we can't do that."

"Why not? Such a pun merits it."

"Dat's so, but we ain't got no microscope here ter see how ter do it," said Shorty.

"Ear—ear!" said Gus.

"Well, there's one thing sure, Gus, Jack Frost did more for your nose than all the temperance societies in the land could do."

"How so?"

"He bleached it out white for once."

"Dat's so. No wonder we didn't know him when he came ter der theater."

"And only think how much it cost to color that bugle," said Billy Barry.

"What a shame it was. It'll take his salary for the next six months to recolor it again," said Shanks, looking sorrowful.

"Well, Shanks, cold will never get the best of you that's certain," said Gus.

"How's that?"

"Because whiskey won't freeze."

Laugh on Shanks.

And so they chaffed each other until they reached St. Louis, where they found warmer weather and grand preparations being made for the holidays.

Shorty, in the meantime, had gotten up a short pantomime that would play about an hour, with which to conclude the evening's entertainment, and especially for the holidays.

The name of this pantomime was "Grist to Mill," and with the assistance of scenery, tricks and machinery at the opera house, and which were once used by the celebrated clown, G. L. Fox, everything was got into working order with the loss of only two days and three rehearsals.

Of course they had to employ some other actors in order to play the piece, but there were any number of them ready to go on, and not the slightest trouble was met with in any respect.

A new feature of the pantomime, however, and wherein it differed from most others, was the fact that there were two clowns, and they were to be played by Shorty and Shorty, Jr.

It was new business to them both, but they felt equal to it, and certainly the public was ready to believe them capable of doing almost anything in the shape of comic acting.

Nor did they make any mistake.

The house was packed the first night, and the main features of the regular performance were given with more than the usual gusto, and the audience was delighted, so that by the time the pantomime was reached on the programme, it was in good condition to receive it.

The curtain went up on a scene where the lads and lassies of the village were having a dance on the green, and a right merry time they had of it.

The two Shortys, dressed as clowns, or twin spirits of mischief, took part in the affair and made all sorts of fun, dancing, athletic feats and tricks on the others.

Then came in the old farmer, a savage-looking old rooster who drives the villagers away and orders the two clowns to take the bag of wheat, place it on a wheelbarrow, and take it to mill.

This, of course, is all done in pantomime, or dumb shows, and then the fun commenced.

The two little clowns tried and tried to lift the bag upon the barrow, but could not budge it. Then the old man knocks them over and attempts to place it on the barrow himself, but as he stoops over to do so, Shorty takes a "double stick" and hits him a tremendous blow on his most prominent part and instantly throws the stick over to the Kid.

The old fellow leaps into the air and turns indignantly upon Shorty, but that individual is looking as honest as a goat. So the old fellow only shakes his fist at him, and attempts again to lift the grist upon the barrow.

This time Shorty, Jr., goes for him with the stick, which he quickly passes over to Shorty again, and so they torment the life out of the old fellow until he finally lifts the grist and is tottering with it toward the barrow, when Shorty trips him up, and he falls, bag and all, on top of the barrow, which instantly goes all to pieces, and the two clowns whale him unmercifully.

Finally he recovers himself, and after a deal of indignation and attempted punishment, they all three get to work to mend the barrow.

Shorty brings in an ax and a big cross-cut saw. The Kid brings in half a dozen tools, none of which can be used in the repairing, and the old fellow is highly enraged, and all the while calling for something else.

But they keep bringing in things until they have a blacksmith's shop in working order, and then he begins to mend the barrow. They play all sorts of tricks on him while he is at work. He pounds his fingers and yells, and Shorty pretends to be so scared that he drops a big hammer on his toe, and then he dances around in anguish with the little joker laughing at him.

Once more he attempts to mend it. Gets it almost together, when Shorty manages to tumble it all down again, and while the old fellow is in great perplexity, Shorty, Jr., comes in leading a donkey. Happy thought! He will let the wheelbarrow go and use the donkey.

He attempts to place the grist upon the back of the donkey, when Shorty pricks him with a pin, causing him to start, and the old man falls upon the grist on the ground. This fun is kept up for some time, until finally he gets the grist upon the donkey's back, and leads him off in triumph, Shorty perched on top of the bag.

The next scene is at the farmer's house, where a young fellow is persuading his daughter to elope with him, seeing that her father is away. They fly.

Then comes a scene at the mill when the grist in being ground, and the clowns cut up all sorts of mischief with both farmer and miller, during which the lover comes and steals the donkey that is tied in front of the mill, and he and his girl escape on its back.

Then the farmer comes out and is in great tribulation, and says that the two boys must carry the flour home themselves. He has the miller place it in two different sacks so they can carry it, while he intimates that he must himself carry a large basket containing something else. The basket is brought out. It is a large one with double flap covers. He sets it down, and goes out for something. The clowns place their bags of flour in the basket, and then get in themselves and let down the covers.

The old man comes in, and not seeing them, expresses his delight that they got caught in their own trap, and had to carry the flour home on their backs, after which he lifts the basket with difficulty, and staggers toward home, where he arrives in the next scene puffing and sweating, when out pop the two clowns and the trick is seen.

Then followed a lot of complications, during which the daughter returns married, and any number of mishaps surround the perplexed father, until at last, everything turns out lovely; especially for the two little clowns.

Of course, it would be almost impossible to give the whole pantomime, but it made a hit, and kept the audience upon a roar from first to last, and Shorty added another plume to his leather duster—that of pantomime clown.

The members of the company were loud in their congratulations, and as business remained tip top to the very last, it was arranged to remain there another week with a slight change of bill.

And a right royal good time did they have there in St. Louis, for it is one of the best places in the world to have a good time in, and if a man cannot enjoy himself there, there is no hope for him anywhere.

At all events, there could be no doubt but that Shanks was happy there, for good business always made him as merry as a bird.

During the last week there, several members of the company noticed that Harry Kennedy was in deep thought, and evidently had something on his mind. Some of them suspected he was struggling with a new joke, and while a few wished to strangle him before its birth, others thought he ought to have a chance to get it off, lest it might kill him, unborn.

Finally it came. The gang was expecting it, and stood ready.

He produced it in this way:

"I fear these little clowns will spoil the business, even though they are as good as Fox," said he.

Not a word was said or a question asked. In fact, they only looked at him in a dazed sort of way, as though at a loss to know what he was driving at. He waited a moment.

"Little Foxes spoil the vines, you know," he added, and then laughed.

They were standing in the bar-room of the hotel at the time, and, without saying a word, they shook hands in the most solemn manner with each other, and walked away, leaving Kennedy there alone.

Thus was his joke strangled at its birth—that is, if it could be called a joke. At all events, he evidently thought it was one, and mentally swore never to laugh again at anything that any of them might say. He went sadly to his room, and began to talk with his dummies, "Pete" and "Joe," for the sake of company. He could tell them all the jokes he wanted to, and they were bound to laugh, or he was bound to make them.

The gang laughed afterwards.

Shorty had some fun with an old fellow who boarded at the Lindell House, where he did, and, as it turned out, it was worth about fifty old-fashioned temperance lectures.

This old fellow's name was Grimes, and he belonged to a good family; in fact, had a good family of his own, but of late he had got to drinking too much, and threatened not only to run through with his health, but his money as well.

His wife and daughters, as well as a brother, had been to see him frequently, to see if they couldn't

get him to brace up, get himself together and stop his drinking.

But all to no purpose. He loved his "budge" better than anything else. Shorty and several members of the troupe had made his acquaintance during their stay, and seeing how nice a man he was naturally, felt sorry for him.

"I'll bet a 'bot,' that I can cure him," said Shorty, one afternoon after the servants had assisted him up to his room, chuck full.

"Yes, I guess you can—if you cut his head off," suggested Kennedy.

"No, I won't cut off nothin'."

"Won't cut off his whiskey?" asked Shanks.

"No, I don't say that. But his room's right next ter mine, an' I'm goin' ter try it on this very night," said Shorty, seriously.

"Try what on; his room?"

This was Kennedy. You see he would have his little joke, at all events.

"Hush!"

"I would if I were you," he added.

"Why would you?" asked Gus.

"I should prefer trying on his room—because his room is better than his company. See?" They all groaned, and Kennedy retired.

Well, that night Shorty dressed himself up in his monkey suit and stole into the old fellow's room, having first arranged matters with the servant who was taking care of him.

He was restless, and would every now and then call for another drink of whiskey.

Shorty perched himself on the foot of the bedstead, while the servant spoke for the first time and asked him what he wanted.

"Whiskey—whiskey! Give me whiskey!" said the poor man, pathetically.

"Don't you think you have had enough, sir?"

"Enough!"

And he opened his eyes to look at the presumptuous servant.

As he did so he caught sight of Shorty, and let go a scream.

"What is the matter, sir?"

"See there!" he exclaimed, pointing at the monkey perched on the footboard.

"What is it?" and the servant looked around as though he could not see anything.

"See. Don't you see anything?"

"Nothing unusual, sir. Why?"

"Don't you see a big monkey, there?"

"No, sir. Alas, I feared it would come to this."

"You don't see anything? There—there, see it move. Ah, drive it away!"

And he struck at it with his hands, after which he pulled the clothes up over his head.

Shorty leaped down and ran to his own room without being seen.

The servant talked with the poor victim, and finally got him to uncover his head.

"Has it gone?" he asked, looking wildly around.

"I guess there is nothing here, sir."

"Oh, I am certain that I saw a monkey."

"I think not, sir; it was only the effects of your distorted imagination."

The old man remained thoughtful and silent for a few moments. He evidently thought he "had 'em."

"Well, I guess you are right. I have had enough."

"You certainly have, sir."

"That's so. If I begin to see such things as that perched on my bed, it is time I stopped. I'll brace up and go home to my family."

And he did, for a more thoroughly frightened man than he was it would be hard to find.

The joke leaked out, however, after he had left the hotel and gone home, and Shorty was from that time forth, during his stay in St. Louis, known as the Great Temperance Monkey.

In fact, several of his friends went so far as to present him with a diploma, creating him an honorary member of a temperance society.

"Oh, dat's all right for you duffs, but I never 'spect ter work on any of you dat way," said he, at their chaffing.

"Why not?" asked someone.

"Because yer soaked so much dat nuffin' smaller'n an elephant would frighten yer."

"Guess then it would depend a good deal on what he had in his trunk," suggested Kennedy.

"If he had a bottle of whiskey in it he'd never frighten you, that's sure," said Gus.

"I think I shall 'William' Shorty after this as the great temperance apostle," said Shanks. "I think it would take."

"Oh, Shorty always 'takes,' when he's asked."

"Well, I's goin' ter ask you duffs all ter take somethin' now," said Shorty.

"All right," said several.

"I'm goin' ter ask yer all ter take der pledge."

"I object," said Kennedy.

"Well, dat's der first time dat I ever know'd yer ter refuse ter take anythin' when yer's asked."

"Oh, we'll all take it if you will," said Barry.

"It would be money in my pocket, but I wouldn't have any fun. No, you duffs sign der pledge, an' I'll be a frightful example for yer, ter keep yer steady."

While they were chaffing each other in this way, an old colored man approached Shorty, hat in hand, and in a most respectful manner. But there was a grin on his mug big enough to hide a coal-hod in.

"Another case of 'dad,' I guess," suggested Gus Williams, speaking to Billy Barry.

"Guess so. Never saw a chap have so many kinds of parents as he has. I expect when we get to San Francisco that he will find a dad there with a pig-tail," replied Billy.

"It would be c-u-e-r-i-o-u-s if he did," said Kennedy, "and thereby would hang a tail. See?"

"Harry, what will you take to commit suicide?" asked Gus.

"Well, I could take arsenic, I suppose."

"I wish to Heaven you would."

"You mean you wish I would 'chop stick,' if I catch your idea."

"I don't care if you chop your head off."

"Then I should be like a great musical composer."

"Who?"

"Chopin."

"Ah!"

"And if I should be cut down like grass, then I should be like still another great composer."

"Who?"

"Hay—den."

"Strangle him!" cried Billy Barry.

"When is a cat's tail like another great composer?"

"Give it up."

"When she's Wag—ner."

"Got your gun with you, Billy?" asked Gus.

"Certainly, but I haven't got the strength to shoot."

"Give it to me, I'll—"

But that bad punster had skipped before death could overtake him.

Meanwhile the old darkey had come to the front for a little chin.

"Am you Massa Shorter?" he asked.

"Yes, bones, I am der hamfater," said Shorty, thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and strutting back and forth, a favorite trick of his.

"Waal, boss, I hearn tell as how you war a black boy."

"So I am, sometimes. What yer want?"

"Boss, I's a poor man. So is my wife."

"Which one wears the breeches?"

"Boss, she can't wear um if she want ter, fo' she's 'bout big's two like me," said he, with a grin as big as his head.

"Well, what yer whistlin' for?"

"Boss, I's hearn heap 'bout you, an' all de coons in St. Looy sat dat you takes de cake. Now I can't 'ford ter pay, an' so I comed fo' ter see if I couldn't work my way in somehow; me'n de ole woman."

"Want ter come real bad?"

"Right smart, boss, much 'bliged, right smart. I wants ter see yer, an' so do de ole woman, an' 'sides, we jus' want ter show dem udder coons dat we arn't no slouches."

"All right. Here's a couple of tickets," said Shorty, handing them to him.

"Bress de Lord, boss, dat I fin' yer. Me'n de ole woman 'll shout glory all de way dar an' back. We will fo' shuah."

"All right. Go in an' show yerself."

"Boss, yer'll know dat we's dar—yer'll know dat we's dar!" he exclaimed, and rushing out with the tickets, he hailed his "old woman."

"Look dar, honey, look dar!" and he held them up for her to look at.

"Wha' dat—wha' dat you say, Moses?"

"Tickets fo' de show ter-night, honey."

"Oh, bress de Lord, Moses, I'll go right home an' make up snoots at dat stuck-up wench, Mrs. Josephus Jonsing, see if I don't."

"All right, honey, spread yerself, fo' dem tickets comed right from Boss Shorter heself," and away they started for home.

Ten minutes afterwards Shorty had forgotten the affair, it was such a common one with him, and he went on in his usual way, having all the fun he could pick up, and arranging with his partner Shanks about future business.

But that night he had occasion to remember the two black deadheads whom he had favored, for he soon found that they were attracting almost as much notice as any member of company was.

They were laughing at everything, and doing it so loud that they gave nobody else a chance to laugh, and the way they would slap their hands and fling them around was cautionary signals to those who sat very near to them.

But when Shorty came out, blacked up, they fairly yelled.

"Dar he am, honey! Dar am Shorter; dar am de boss dat gub me de tickets!"

"Bress de Lord!" exclaimed the old woman, who somehow appeared to think that she was in a camp meeting or something of the kind.

"Somebody tickle dem coons wid a straw an' see if yer can't make 'em laugh. Don't like ter see 'em so quiet," said Shorty, looking up at them.

This produced general laughter, but those tickled coons outlaughed them all. It was a big thing for them, and a loud thing for everybody else. But Shorty enjoyed it and sailed in heavy on his banjo.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM St. Louis Shorty and his company went to Kansas City, where they billed to play for three nights.

They were having lots of fun and making a "bar'l o' money." As for the fun, Shorty, of course, was getting his share of it, for he was "that kind of a cat," but to tell the truth, there wasn't one of the gang but was having a first-class time all around.

But it was in Kansas City that something happened which changed everything, so far as the route was concerned, and hurried them on towards San Francisco sooner by two months than they had originally intended.

Shorty took up the Kansas City *Herald* the next morning after their opening there, for the purpose of seeing what it had to say regarding the show, and after reading a very complimentary notice relating to it, he naturally ran his eye over the news and interesting articles.

He had not read many minutes before his attention was attracted to the following, from a correspondent to that paper in San Francisco:

"A QUEER LITTLE HERMIT."

"There is living on the outskirts of Oakland quite a human curiosity, in the person of a dwarf hermit. His name is Burwick, and he is evidently about sixty years of age, although beyond what people have a mind to conjecture there is but little known in relation to him. He lives in a small stone house entirely alone, so far as human association is concerned, although he has three ferocious dogs who guard him with jealous care.

"He has lived in his present abode about ten years, but it is known that he has been in various parts of California for twenty-five or thirty years, and is supposed to be possessed of considerable wealth. Who he is or from where he came originally is not known, although he speaks English, when he speaks at all, and is thought to have come from some of the eastern states. Whether his voluntary withdrawal from all but canine society is on account of some secret sorrow, or whether it is on account of his physical peculiarities, is also a matter of conjecture. At all events, he lives alone by himself, and is not seen in the streets of Oakland oftener than once per month, and very seldom goes out to San Francisco. Of course, all sorts of stories are circulated regarding him, but the curious give his home a wide berth on account of his dogs, two of which always remain at home while the others accompany him whenever he goes away. There may be and probably is a romance connected with this little old hermit, but whether it will ever be solved this side of the grave is doubtful."

Shorty read this over two or three times, and then finally put it out, and placed it carefully away in his pocketbook.

Then he proceeded to look and feel serious over the matter. Who was this little old hermit?

The thought that perhaps he might be his father occupied his mind for a long time as he sat there in the reading-room of the hotel, and he finally made up his mind that he would never rest until he had satisfied himself on the point.

Shanks came into the room while he was cogitating over the matter. It was late, but he had been up late the night before, with some of the gang, while Shorty had escaped them and retired early, and was, therefore, up early, comparatively.

"Halloo, Teddy, how you was?" asked Shanks.

"Oh, putty good," replied Shorty, soberly.

"Well, you look pretty good, in a horn. What's the matter with you, old man?"

"Nothing much; why?"

"Why! You look as though you had the pip. Don't feel very well, I guess."

"Not very."

"Come and have a cocktail."

"Nixy."

"What! Gone back on your bitters?"

"No, but I don't feel cock-tailed this morning."

"What, getting tired of having fun and making money? Gracious, you must be off your nut."

"No, but I'm tired of knockin' around in these little towns, an' I've made up my mind for a change, Shanksy," said he, throwing his little short legs up on the edge of the table.

"The devil you say! What sort of a change?" asked Shanks, considerably startled.

"I'm goin' ter work through ter Frisco just as fast as possible."

"What for, Shorty?"

"'Cos I's tired. I wants ter get ter Frisco an' take a rest."

Shanks was silent and thoughtful over the sudden change of route.

"We're right on the road now, and 'stead of goin' ter these other little one-hoss towns that yer were talking 'bout, we can push right through ter Denver, from there to Cheyenne, Ogden, Salt Lake City, Virginia City, Sacramento, Oakland and 'Frisco. See?" he asked, turning to Shanks.

"Yes; the route's all right, only there are such long distances between them," mused Shanks.

"All right. Get there so much der quicker."

"Yes; but look at the dozens of good show towns that we skip."

"Dat's all right. Don't I tell yer dat I'm tired?" he asked, a trifle severely.

"Very well. That settles it."

"Of course it does. Change yer route. Call in ther advance agent, an' start him this way."

"All right. Anything to oblige the boss," said Shanks, rising and walking out of the room, leaving Shorty alone to his meditations.

Meeting Gus Williams and two or three others just coming from breakfast, he said:

"What the deuce has come over the old man, I wonder?"

"Why—got a 'head' on him?" asked Gus.

"Yes."

"Oh, he'll get over that all right."

"No, he won't."

"Why not?"

"Because he's got a pig's head on him this morning," said Shanks, sadly.

"A pig's head?"

"Maybe he went to bed on some pig's feet," suggested Kennedy, looking very knowing.

"No, he's taken it into his head that he will change the route."

"Change the route?"

"Yes; and push through to 'Frisco as quickly as possible."

"The deuce! What ails him?"

"I know," said Kennedy; "he has got a touch of the chills, and wants to get into the glorious climate of California."

"But we are doing such a bang-up business along this route"

"I know it; but he says he is tired and wants to get to 'Frisco for a rest."

"That suits me, if the salary goes on," said Harry.

"Oh, I guess we can talk him out of it," suggested Gus. "Where is his nibs?"

"In the reading-room. But it's no use to try it; he's as set as a mule."

"But he don't mean to go through without stopping, does he?"

"Only at the larger towns."

"Well, that won't be so bad. Humor him, and perhaps we can talk him out of his notion after a while."

"Well, you can try it," replied Shanks, walking away.

He knew Shorty too well to have any faith in their chin music over him, and so started at once to communicate by telegraph to his advance agent to have him stop all negotiations and return at once to Kansas City for instructions.

But Gus and several other members of the company concluded they would have a talk with the "old man," and see what he had to say. So they walked into the reading-room, where Shorty was still seated, looking more thoughtful and serious than they had often seen him before.

The fact was, he had made up his mind to keep this affair to himself, for the gang had always managed to have considerable fun at his expense whenever they had known of his attempting to find his dad, and in this case he resolved to work alone, whether he was successful or not.

"Halloo, Shorty, how's this?" asked Gus, walking in and taking a seat opposite to him, at the same time brushing the ashes from his segar.

"Yer ought ter know best, yer smoking it," replied Shorty, indifferently.

"Oh, want one, eh?" and he handed him a segar.

"Dat's der way ter 'lustrate yer remarks," replied Shorty, showing a little grin, as he took a box of matches from his pocket.

"Yes, but his remarks are not very profusely illustrated," said Kennedy, looking wishful.

"Oh, you be hanged. Go out to the bar-room, and you can have your remarks illustrated either with segars or drinks."

"Yes, but I like to employ and encourage home talent, my dear boy."

"Well, these are imported, so they won't suit you," said Gus, leaning complacently back in his chair.

"Smokes on Simon," said Billy Barry.

Harry at once went out and brought in segars for the crowd.

"Shanks says you are going to change the route and put for 'Frisco," said Gus.

"Well, you fellows don't care, do you?"

"No, if it don't shorten the season."

"It won't, if we take in these other places as we come back, will it?"

"Of course not. As for my part, I had rather be in California than in this wintry region, I am dead sure."

"You bet," said Barry. "It will be like a change from winter to summer."

"Dat's what ails my thermometer, boys," said Shorty, puffing away at his segar, and watching the wreaths of smoke which floated above his head up towards the ceiling.

"Good boy!"

"I wants ter lay off an' loaf awhile, an' I've no notion of doin' it in a snow bank. I'll give yer all a week either before or after we play there."

"Bully!" said Kennedy.

"Yes, it will enable you to brace up and get a few square meals. He says he hasn't had enough to eat since we started," said Gus, at which they all laughed, knowing his appetite.

"How could I have a square meal, when we have been eating all 'round ever since we left New York."

"Chestnut!" cried Gus.

"Slug him!" added Barry.

"How's that for a pun?" asked the proud author.

"Upon my word I can't see it."

"But its age enables us to smell it."

"Smell let?"

"Of course," and there was another laugh.

"Gentlemen, why is Shorty like a hog that is going from one garden to another?" asked Kennedy, suddenly brightening up, thinking he had got them.

"Give it up."

"Shoot him if he tells it."

"No, let him tell it and then make him swallow it."

"Why am I?" asked Shorty. "Yer see, boys, I like ter encourage him, for he may say somethin' funny some time. Why am I like a hog dat is goin' from one garden to another?"

"Because you are going to change your route. See? Pronounced 'root.' See it?"

Simultaneously every fellow present drew forth his handkerchief and covered his eyes as though weeping.

"Oh, pshaw! Now isn't that good?" he asked, impatiently.

"One of der most 'fectin' stories I ever heard," replied Shorty, mournfully.

"Very affecting, indeed," added Gus, drying his eyes and looking solemn.

"Didn't know he could sing those pathetic songs so well," said Barry.

"Throws so much feeling into them."

"First thing of the kind that ever brought tears to my eyes," said Ellis.

"Oh, you fellows be hanged. You think nobody can get off a good thing but yourselves," said Kennedy.

"Oh, yer do get off a rich thing once in a while, Harry," said Shorty, seriously.

"That's so," added Gus.

"You got off a rich thing ther other day."

"Ah, yes? What was it?" asked Kennedy, brightly ening up.

"Your undershirt," replied Shorty.

A regular yell went up at this, in which all joined with the exception of the hapless ventriloquist, it is needless to say.

"Well, when we get where the weather is a little warmer, I guess there'll be a good many rich things got off," said he, sharply.

"Well, we shall send you out into the mountains next time," said Gus.

"I can get 'high' without that."

"Yes, in anything but your business."

"I guess my business is as good as yours. If I couldn't sing a Dutch song better than you can, I'd dry up," retorted Kennedy.

"You are right, Harry," said Gus.

"Why, can Harry sing Dutch songs?" asked Billy Barry.

"Of course he can. He sang one for one of his 'dummies' the other night and broke its jaw."

"Dat's so, an' it brought down der house," said Shorty, warming into something of his old humor once more.

"Well, you'd bring down the house, Gus, if the same thing should happen to your jaw," said Kennedy, this time having it on Williams.

"Good boy!" said they all, and each one of them gave him a congratulatory shake of the hand, which pleased him so much that he asked the gang out into the barroom to "see a man."

"Now, fellows, why is Gus Williams like Harry's landlord?" asked Shorty.

Of course they all gave it up but Harry, who made several unsuccessful attempts to guess it.

"Well, why is Gus Williams like Kennedy's landlord?" asked Barry.

"Because Kennedy gets the best of him occasionally."

Laughs on Kennedy this time.

Harry leaned up against the bar and began to cudgel his brains for something else, while the others laughed and poured things down their throats.

"Let's buy him off," said Barry, pointing to Harry.

"Why?"

"He's going to get off something else."

"Yes; let's buy him up. How much will you take and not say it?" asked Gus.

The laugh which followed fairly bluffed him out of anything he might have intended to say.

And so they laughed, chaffed and joked each other until Shorty had regained his former spirits, although nothing could induce him to change his mind regarding going through to California.

While all this was going on, Shorty, Jr., was quietly putting up a job on Harry Kennedy, in payment for one he had played on him a few days ago, and which got the laugh on the Kid.

Those who have witnessed the remarkable performances of this ventriloquist know that he uses several "dummies" or figures, the lower jaws of which are so arranged that he can work them and cause them to move as though in the act of speaking, while he is in reality doing the talking himself, and making it appear both to the eye and ear of the spectator that the figures are speaking.

Well, the little runt was bound to get square with the ventriloquist, and this is the way he went to work to do it.

Going to the theater, he made his way to the trunk where Kennedy keeps his dummies, and after trying about twenty keys of a bunch that he had borrowed of a blacksmith, he managed to unlock the trunk.

Then he proceeded to fill the mouths of the two figures, "Pete" and "Jim," with red pepper, after which he placed them back in the trunk again and locked it, after accomplishing which, he returned to the hotel, looking as honest as a goat that has just eaten a shirt.

Well, night came, of course, and with a full house to see the show. It will be remembered that the company was now doing its old business, having only performed the pantomime at St. Louis during the holidays.

It was noticed by different members of the company that Shorty, Jr., was remarkably happy on this particular occasion, and that something tickled him to such a degree that he could hardly contain himself.

"What is it, 'Sausage'?" asked Gus, for he quite as often called the little fellow "Sausage" as anything else.

"What's sausage?" asked the runt.

"I mean what gives you the grin that you are wearing on your classic mug to-night?"

"What der yer think?"

"Some fun, I suspect."

"Der's where yer whistle it right."

"What is it?"

"You'll see bimeby," said he, with a grin.

"When? None of your pranks on me, or I'll chuck you into an umbrella cover, and throw you into the river. What is it?"

"Some fun."

"With me?"

"No. Mum?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Wid Kennedy?"

"Is that so?"

"Just wait 'til yer see him go on."

"All right."

"Tell der boys on der sly ter see it."

The result was that the other members of the company were on the look out to see what the fun was to be, for the Kid never gave it away; and when Harry Kennedy was reached on the bill, and the artist went

out on the stage where his trunk was in waiting for him, they gathered at the wings to see his "act."

He was received with a hearty round of applause, for he had made a decided hit the night before, and had been mentioned in the papers as being the greatest ventriloquist of the day. He began:

"Ladies and gentlemen, having reached my place on the programme, I will now proceed to give you some specimens of the art of ventriloquism;" and then, after giving a few samples, he continued: "You will observe that not a muscle of my face moves while giving these imitations, and I will defy any person to detect me while doing so."

And then there was heard a little squeaky voice, which seemed to come from the trunk.

"Halloo! who's in that trunk, I wonder? Is that you, Pete?"

"Yes," came the voice again.

"How came you in that trunk?"

"I came in here after Jim."

"What! Is Jim there, too?"

"Yes."

"What did you get in there for?"

"We were playing hide and seek."

"Well, I guess as you are both hidden, I will proceed to seek," said he, unlocking the trunk.

As he did so the voice became more distinct, and so natural did it seem that it evoked a round of applause. He held an imaginary conversation with the two figures, after which he proceeded to take them out in a very careless manner, and then he seated himself, and placed one on each knee.

"Well, now, what have you to say for yourself, Pete?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!"

"Luck at Johnny up in the gallery!" the little dummy seemed to say, as Kennedy caused him to look up toward the gallery.

But the working of the under jaw began to slap the red pepper around, and the first thing the ventriloquist knew, he was tossing his head and giving vent to a sneeze. Then to make it seem a part of the business, he caused Pete to imitate the sneeze.

This created a laugh, but it also threw out more of the pepper, and in less than half a minute the air in his immediate vicinity was full of flying pepper, mixed up with sneezes.

Harry was confused and confounded. He couldn't understand it at all. Waiting a moment to see if his sneezing fit would not pass away, he concluded to try "Jim" next.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I trust you will pardon this sneezing digression, for the fact is, I (ar-te-chew!) I—I—(ar-te-chew!)"

This provoked a roar of laughter, for while some of them looked upon it as only a part of the act, others regarded it as an accident.

"Now, Jim, what have you to say? (ar-te-chew!)"

Jim made no reply, of course, but while poor Harry was sneezing so terrifically that he nearly turned a summersault and spilled himself and his dummies every time, he caught a glance of the other performers standing by the wings laughing, and instantly the thought occurred to him that some of them had put up a job on him.

He attempted to examine the mouths of his dummies, but in doing so, some more of the red pepper flew out, nearly strangling him. Then he essayed to explain to the audience that some of the jokers had played a trick on him; but all he could do was to sneeze, while his figures flew in different directions, "Pete" hitting a Dutch fiddler in the mouth and setting him to sneezing also. The audience yelled, and amid the most uproarious laughter and applause he retired from the stage, sneezing and defeated.

He was hopping mad, and tried to find out who had worked the racket; but, of course, he did nothing of the kind, and so the performance went on with what little ventriloquism the poor fellow had been able to give.

Shorty, however, made it all right, and he fixed it the next night, after which they set out for Denver.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM Kansas City they went to Denver, Colorado, where they were to play three nights.

It will be remembered that Shorty had read about a little old hermit by the name of Burwick, living in Oakland, and that he became interested, and changing his route, resolved to push to San Francisco for the purpose of finding out whether he was his dad or not.

He allowed it to occupy his mind when he was alone, but that was so seldom, and there was so much devilry going on all the while, that he had but little chance for reflection or the blues.

Denver is a bright little city, and a good show town, and the last three nights there produced good houses, although nothing of any importance happened there beyond the usual amount of devilry that was chronic with the company. They played at the Opera House.

Harry Kennedy barely got through sneezing by the time they got to Denver, although he was far from getting over being mad. Who the joker was that played the red-pepper trick on him he could not make up his mind for a long time, and while in this state he resolved to get even with everybody in the company, so as to be sure that he got at the right one.

But finally, from something that someone said, he took a tumble, and almost knew that it was the Kid—Shorty, Jr.

Then he made up his mind to step on him just as he would on a cockroach, but, after thinking the matter over for a while, he remembered the joke that he had played on him only a short time before,

and then he concluded that it was only about even. But the gang had the grand laugh on him for a long time afterwards, and it was several weeks before he regained confidence in "Pete" and "Jim," and made it a point to examine their mouths every night before going on to perform with them.

"All right for you, 'Sausage.' I will lay for you," said he to the Kid.

"Lay! Yer better stan'," said the little wag.

"How?"

"Stan' der beers."

"I'll give you a beer if you ever play such a joke as that on me again."

"Me! How'd yer know I played it?"

"Now that's all right."

"Of course it is."

"Oh, cheese it, Harry! Why don't you suspect a fellow of your size?" asked Gus Williams.

"That's all right, I tell you; but if he plays any more such nasty jobs on me I'll put him into a howitzer, and shoot him up into one of these mountains for the jackalls to gather up," said Harry, indignantly.

"Oh, don't break him up. He isn't hardly large enough for a funeral if you take him whole."

"Yes; better kill him decently," said Billy Barry, sober as a clam.

"Well, I tell you it was no joke getting that red pepper into a fellow's eyes."

"That's so."

"I say, Kennedy; why was dat trick like bein' pitched out of a sleigh by a runaway horse?" asked the Kid, with a grin.

Harry had to be pretty mad when he would not tackle a conundrum, and after looking at the little rascal for a moment, a smile began to steal over his face.

"Well, why is it?" he asked, at length.

"'Cause it's so-no joke."

"Good boy," said he, grasping the little fellow's hand; "I won't kill you now, but I'll get even with you sometime."

And so the matter dropped for the time being.

From Denver they went to Cheyenne, at the junction of the Denver branch of the Pacific road where they were billed to play two nights. Cheyenne is a wine-awake place of considerable importance, and as there happened to be quite a large garrison of soldiers stationed at Fort Cheyenne, business was lively, and two good houses rewarded the company of players.

From Cheyenne they went to Ogden, Utah, for one night, where a very bad house confronted them. In fact, it was scarcely large enough to pay their expenses in the place.

The next morning they took the train for Salt Lake City, where they were billed for three nights, with the privilege of four if business warranted it. The ride, at almost any other season of the year, over this route, and, in fact, over the whole route from Omaha to San Francisco, is one of the most sublime through which the iron horse of civilization ever ran.

And even when the hills, mountains, forests, canyons, and deep-down valleys are covered with snow, the view is grand from almost any point of observation.

There were several Mormons on the train with our friends, and it would have been a wonder, truly, if they did not manage to have some fun with them.

Gus Williams had already got three women and an old rooster (supposed to be their husband) on the string by informing them that he was going to Salt Lake City to see the great Mormon prophet on some very important business regarding the good of the church, and that he intended to invest a few hundred thousand dollars there and settle down.

This pleased them so that they promised him five or six wives, together with all the benefits of the Mormon religion, which of course pleased the earnest joker very much.

Altogether they had fun enough to make the journey to Salt Lake City seem very short, and when they reached there everybody was in good spirits.

They found the printer's ink scattered over the town quite liberally, and the prospect for a good house very flattering. Night showed that they had not miscalculated at all, for the Salt Lake Theater was never packed to a greater degree than it was to see the show promised by Shorty's Varieties.

And that audience was not a whit disappointed with the show, as no audience had been since it started out on the road, so that the prospect of doing good business was quite favorable, even if the houses fell off a trifle.

It happened just at that time that there was a sleighing carnival at Salt Lake City, and everything that had runners, or anything from a jack to a horse to pull it, was out on the road, and everybody was enjoying it hugely.

Gus Williams and Billy Barry resolved to have a drive out by the lake, and began to go around to the livery-stables in search of a turnout. But the search did not turn out very well, for the only thing they could find was a double-sleigh for two horses, for which the proprietor wished and expected to receive five dollars an hour.

This they considered a trifle steep, but while they were talking the matter over, along came Shanks and Harry Kennedy, on the same errand.

So it was quickly arranged, and the turnout engaged for the afternoon. They were fortunate in getting it, anyhow, and as each was to pay his share, it would make the price quite reasonable.

They drove up to the hotel in great shape, just to show off and let folks see what they had got, and Shorty felt sick. He wanted to go himself, but as the others were ahead of him, he, of course, was out.

"I say, I'll meet you duffs out on der road," said

he, while Gus was up to his room to get a pair of driving gloves.

"Oh, you will, eh? Going to walk?" asked Shanks.

"Yes, I'll walk ahead of you."

"Can't get a horse and sleigh in town?"

"I'll try it."

"All right. We'll wait for you out at the Lake House," said Barry.

"But we won't agree to wait until you come," said Gus, reappearing at that moment.

"Maybe you duffs think I can't get a hoss an' sleigh. I'll show you."

"Yer bet we will," added the Kid.

"All right. Ta-ta," said they, driving away.

"Oh, ta!" replied Shorty.

"Come on," said Shorty, Jr., and they at once went to the landlord to see if there was a possibility of hiring or buying a horse and cutter.

"Hang me if I know of anything that ain't engaged," said he, thoughtfully.

"Don't care a rap what it is if it's got go inter it," said Shorty.

"Well, let me see. Here, Sam, come here," he added, calling one of the porters.

"Yes, sur."

"I wonder if Mat Lingham's horse is out?"

"Guess not, sur," replied the man, with a grin.

"Sure, I don't think onybody wud take the folkies of him, onyway."

"Go and see."

"Here," said Shorty, handing him a quarter. "Now, hurry up."

"I will, sur," and he vanished.

"Has he got a sleigh?"

"Well, it's a sort of one."

"But the hoss?"

"He's a devilish homely old skin-full of bones, but he can go like thunder."

"Dat's my meat!" exclaimed Shorty.

"Well, maybe the crows will dispute that point with you," replied the landlord, laughing.

"I'll risk it if I can only beat dem duffs as has just gone out. Here, Kid, go somewhere an' buy—" and he finished his instructions in a whisper, after which the little fellow started off on a run, grinning all over himself.

"Can you drive?"

"Can I! I can drive an elephant or a mule."

"Good enough; but if you get this old nag he'll give you all the business you want, if he only gets warmed up. Ah, here comes Sam. Well, what did he say? Is he home? Can we have him?"

"Sure, could Mat says as how yer can have him for foive dollars this day," said the porter.

"Good. Bring him right up to the hotel, and here's another quarter for you."

"So I will, sur," and again he vanished.

"How far is it to der Lake House?"

"About three miles, and the old nag will just about get warmed up by the time you get there."

"Dat's what I want him ter do. Give me some nice smokers," he added, going to the segar case.

In a few moments Shorty, Jr., returned.

"Well?"

The Kid pulled something out of his pocket and slyly showed it to him.

"Dat's all hunk. Now let's get our ulsters," and they started up stairs to their room.

In five minutes they were down again, inside of their big ulsters which reached nearly to the floor, and two more comical-looking little coons than they were it would have been impossible to find.

Just then Sam made his appearance behind one of the queerest, scrawniest, scraggiest-looking old horses that ever walked on four legs. As to telling how old he was, that was out of the question, and when he was made, the maker either had nothing on hand but skin and bones, or the nag had lost everything else since then. Indeed, he never could by any possibility have been even a passably good-looking animal, for every disease known to the veterinary surgeon could never have doubled him up in such shape, and made his hind legs six inches longer than his bowing front ones, or made his ungainly head a foot longer than any horse was ever known to wear before.

But in order to set off his peculiarities, three of his knee joints were bandaged with red flannel, and the aroma of horse medicine could be detected a rod away from him in any direction.

And then the sleigh. It was evidently one of the first ever made in Salt Lake City, and it might be well supposed that the maker had never seen one before, so greatly did it differ from anything ever seen set up on runners before.

But it corresponded first-rate with the horse, and the harness was not a whit out of keeping with the remainder of the rig, being made up of several different varieties. The saddle was a part of a cart harness, and the traces evidently belonged to a harness designed for a double mule truck, while other portions of it were quite as incongruous.

Both of the Shortys laughed for full five minutes as they surveyed the turnout from where they stood on the piazza, for in all the burlesques they had ever known, nothing they had ever seen could compare with this.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked the landlord, after they had partially ceased laughing.

Quite a crowd had gathered, and were also laughing at the remarkable turnout.

"Think! Why, ramrod, it beats anything I ever seen," said Shorty. "Wish I owned it."

"Well, that old scarecrow has got a heap of go in him, as you will find out."

"Well, dat's what we want," said the Kid.

"An' I'm glad he's as handsome as he is. Come, let's get in an' try him," said Shorty. "Does he want ter be tied when we stop?" this to the porter.

"Faix, I think he'll stop anywhere yees put him."

"Got no bad habits?"

"Sure, he'd be the devil intirely if he had, wid his bad looks, so he wud."

"All right. I'll chance him," said he, getting into the apology for a sleigh.

"I say, landlord, if we don't come back, you can tell our friends how we perished," said the Kid.

"All right, but I guess there's no danger."

They took seats in the sleigh, and Shorty picked up the rope lines.

"What's his name?"

"Bergh."

"Good enough. Git up, Berghy," and the homely beast at once started off, while the crowd standing around sent up a shout.

Well, there was a turnout, and although a great many people knew it from long association, yet they had never seen strangers driving it before, and especially such little runts as had it now.

The boys along the street yelled, and everybody stopped, as Shorty, almost hidden behind the huge, ungainly beast, urged him forward.

He did not succeed at first in getting much more speed than grace of motion out of him, but he gradually warmed up, and began to show himself to be like a singed cat—much better than he looked, and yet he was bound to create a laugh in spite of all the good qualities he might develop.

But Shorty was delighted. Nothing in the world could have pleased him better than this turn out did, and he wouldn't have swopped it with any team on the road, no, not with a hundred dollars to boot.

"Git up, Bergh! Brace up an' show yer good points," said he, reaching for him with the whip.

This had the effect to make the old nag let himself out a knot or two, and away he went at really a spanking pace, although whether he was trotting, pacing, racking, or running, would have puzzled an old jockey to tell.

"Dad, dis takes der cake," said the Kid.

"Yer bet it does. G'lang!"

In about ten minutes more they reached the Lake House, where the other fellows had agreed to wait for them, and sure enough there they were, and just on the point of getting into their sleigh again to continue the drive.

But when they saw this old nag coming, as they did sometime before they knew who was driving it, they sent up a yell and waited for the strange-looking turnout to approach.

"What do you call it?"

"Tell me and you may have it."

"It isn't a sheep," said Gus.

"Oh, no, and it isn't a cow."

"Nor a dromedary," said Shanks, and again they laughed and held their sides, attracting a crowd of sleigh riders, who joined with them.

"Well, now, you duffs are havin' der grand yell at me, arn't you?" said Shorty, which only provoked another outburst. "I'll bet wine for der gang dat I can beat yer for a mile."

This created another riotous hurrah.

"I'll bet wine against peanuts."

"Has your 'what is it' got any speed in him?" asked Gus Williams, going around and taking a critical look at the animal.

"Money or wine 'gainst peanuts dat I can beat you duffs for a mile," shouted Shorty.

"Let's try him a mile, just for fun," said Gus.

"Nix! Wine for der gang."

"All right. Come on. Where is a mile?" he asked, turning to one of the hostlers.

"From here to the forks of the road is just a mile," said he, pointing down the street.

"All right. Get in and let us see what the old 'what is it' can do," said Gus.

Amid much excitement and merriment, the quartette got into the sleigh, Shorty drew up the reins and waited for the word "go."

When all was ready one of the spectators gave the word, and away the rivals started. Gus and his team at once took the lead, leaving Shorty and his old nag far behind, while both the spectators and those in the sleigh sent up a yell that was heard for miles around.

But Shorty was not discouraged. He believed he could win, but if he could not, he was sure to have a bushel of fun out of it, and that to him was quite as good.

But he was bound to do his best to win, and so he gave the old nag a liberal supply of gad, and so he began to pick up and to overhauled these ahead of him. Faster and faster he threw himself, and before half of the distance had been gone over, he was close behind them.

Gus was urging his horses to do their best, and those in the sleigh with him were yelling like so many wild Indians, hoping to break up the old nag that was so surely gaining on them. But all to no purpose, however, for that ungainly old crow-bait seemed to take courage from their yells, and at every leap, spring, bound, or whatever it might be called, he gained, until with a spurt and dash he passed them.

Then it was Shorty's turn to yell, and both he and the Kid knew their business, and went in to the extent of their lungs. The old nag seemed to understand it, and went even faster than ever, so that when he reached the forks of the road he was at least ten lengths ahead, and seemingly not doing his best even then. It was a bad beat.

Gus saw that he had caught a Tartar, and without attempting to finish the race, he turned around and gave gad to his team to get them back to the Lake House as soon as possible.

But Shorty was back there quite as soon as he was, and then, of course the laugh was on Gus and his gang. It was a grand laugh, and the crowd joined in it, greatly to the chagrin of Gus and his company, while Shorty became a hero.

"Well, duffs, what der yer say now?" he asked, as they assembled in the bar-room.

"We say, name yer quantity," said Barry.

The popping of champagne corks punctuated the conversation for the next half hour, and the defeated gang paid for the music.

"You don't dare race me back to the city," said they after the crowd had been thoroughly wet.

"Don't I? Try it on!" said Shorty.

"All right. Bring up the equines!" Gus called.

"We are all out of equines," said the chief hostler; "but you'll find lots of good things on our bill of fare."

After the laugh was finished at the hostler's expense, and explanations made, the horses were brought up, and all hands embarked for another race to Salt Lake City, a basket of wine to be the forfeit.

In the midst of a cheer from the assembled crowd, they started. But, as before, Gus and his team took the lead, and Shorty with his nag was far behind. He gave him a gad, however, and he began to crawl up in his own peculiar style until they were abreast, and the occupants of both sleighs were yelling with all the lungs they had.

When directly opposite, Shorty, Jr., took a big cannon fire-cracker from his pocket, and igniting it by his segar, he waited until the fuse had burned nearly up, and then throwing it between the horses of Gus' team, it exploded with a terrific report, frightening the animals nearly out of their hides.

The result was that they kicked, and jumped, and ripped, and in less than three shakes of a goat's tail, that sleigh was knocked into about fifty pieces, and that gang was scattered in at least four different directions, all of them going head first into the snowbanks that lined the drive.

"Come on!" shouted Shorty, as he pulled hard on his patched-up nag.

But there was no response from that gang of four. They were very busy picking themselves out of the snow, and Shorty driving quickly past them, yelled: "Good-by, duffs!"

But still there was no response, for Gus was holding on to the lines for dear life, and trying to save the horses, while Shanks and the others were gathering up the pieces of the wreck.

Shorty, however, did not wait to see how they worked the "pick up," but giving gad to his old nag, he reached Salt Lake City and the hotel in good time, paid for his team, and received the congratulations of the landlord and those who witnessed his "send-off," and lighting a fresh segar, he and the Kid took seats on the piazza to wait the appearance of the gang.

But they had to wait for nearly two hours before that sorry and stricken quartette made its appearance; and when they did, Gus Williams was riding one horse and leading the other, while Billy Barry, Shanks and Harry Kennedy each appeared with different portions of the wrecked turn-out on their shoulders, and breathing curses loud and deep upon Shorty and the Kid, who had caused them all their trouble, and who were then lying off on the piazza, smoking segars and laughing ready to burst as they appeared upon the scene.

CHAPTER XXII.

THAT tramping gang was mad. They made use of cuss words. They conspired together to kill and annihilate the two Shortys, for they had used them badly, besides using them badly up.

A wild shout greeted them as they came up to the hotel, which they were obliged to pass, on their way to the livery-stable where they had hired the turnout for five dollars an hour, to say nothing of having to pay for the damage that was done.

Gus Williams was especially sore.

But they did not stop at the hotel, and though they received a grand hurrah as they went past, they were too sick to wait for compliments.

A crowd followed them, increasing in its proportions at every rod, until the police were obliged to drive them away and investigate the cause of the uncommon excitement.

But those sleigh-riders finally reached the stable, and throwing down the pieces of the wreck, demanded to know the damages.

"Yes, what's the damage?" asked Billy Barry.

"Guess there must have been a good deal of damage when we took it, or it never would have gone to pieces so easily," said Kennedy.

"What has happened?" demanded the stable-keeper.

"Well, the horses happened to get frightened; happened to kick a few times; the sleigh happened to go to pieces; we happened to escape being kicked, and now we happen to want to know what the damage is," said Gus, sarcastically.

"What frightened them?"

"A piece of Fourth of July. Come, hurry up."

The owner went over the horses first to see if they were hurt badly, but found that fortunately they had escaped with a little bark knocked off their kickers, and were otherwise all right.

Then he examined the sleigh and said something about "kindling wood," after which he went over the robes to see if they were all there.

Billy Barry thought they were all there, for he had fugged them about two miles.

"Well, say a hundred dollars," said the owner.

"What for?"

"Damages."

"But how about your horses?"

"Well, they are not damaged much."

"But how about letting skittish animals to strangers?"

"Skittish! Two of the most gentle horses in

"Salt Lake City. Never knew them to kick up before."

"Probably not. I never knew any horse to kick up before; they generally kick up behind," said Gus, seriously.

This created a laugh among the bystanders at the owner's expense.

"Oh, you know what I mean. They are gentle horses, but when a piece of Fourth of July overtakes them at this season of the year, it is not to be expected that they will not get frightened. No, a hundred dollars will not more than pay me for the sleigh and other damages."

"But don't you intend to allow us anything for bringing home the wreck?" asked Shanks.

"Well, call it an even hundred and I will say nothing about the fifteen dollars for the three hours you have been out."

The four fellows consulted, and finally went down into their pockets and dragged out twenty-five dollars apiece, which they handed over with very bad grace, finding their only consolation in their threats to get even with Shorty.

They returned to their hotel, where the two Shortys were surrounded by a crowd of admirers, and such a shout as went up when that sleighing party put in an appearance was a caution to ear trumpets.

It was fully five minutes before anybody could get a chance to speak, although Shorty had already ordered the basket of wine which he had won, and the barkeeper was filling up a row of glasses that reached the whole length of the bar, there being plenty of thirsty ones to drink it.

"Want ter race again, Gus?" yelled Shorty, Jr.

"Why don't yer get a war boss when yer go out on der road?" asked Shorty, laughing.

"I think they did make war and some tall slaying," suggested Kennedy, who never missed a chance to get in his little funny work, however mad he might be.

But the other three were inclined to be grouchy and have nothing to say.

"Here's der wine, Gus, come drink."

The four victims consulted together a moment, after which they assumed more jovial faces and struggled up to the bar. Both of the Shortys were standing upon chairs so as to see the fun.

"How did yer like yer sleigh-ride, Harry?"

"Oh, go to the devil!"

"Come have a drink before yer go."

"We'll get even with you for that, Shorty, see if we don't," said Gus.

"You bet we will," said Shanks, who up to this moment had but little to say.

Probably one reason why he had been so glum was because he had landed on his head in the snowbank when the explosion took place, and before he could get right side up again, he was filled with snow, which soon melted and made him feel very uncomfortable.

"What's der matter wid yer, Shanky?" asked Shorty, laughing.

"Oh, you'll find out before we get to 'Frisco, and don't forget it."

"Can't yer take a joke, ole man?"

"Yes, a joke is a joke, but that was a scurvy trick. Why, it might have killed us all."

"Well, dat wouldn't be a scurvy trick, would it?"

"Oh, all right. But we'll drink with you," he added, going to the bar.

"Certainly," said Barry, and finally they all stood with a glass of champagne in hand.

"Here's ter der ole war boss, Bergh. Long may he be able ter hoop her up as he did ter-day!" yelled Shorty, holding up his glass.

The toast was drank amid much laughter and merriment, although the four victims did not join in it.

During the next half hour that basket of wine was partaken of by the crowd, and the best of good feeling succeeded the best of spirits.

But when the last round was taken up, and the last bottle drained, Gus called to Shorty:

"Well, here's to you, old man, and although calculating to get even with you soon, we can but thank you for this flow of champagne."

"Thank me! Why, yer drinkin' wid yerselves," said Shorty, laughing.

"Not much."

"What?"

"Not any."

"How's dat; didn't yer bet?"

"Yes."

"An' didn't I beat yer?"

"We claim a foul."

"A what!" screamed Shorty, while the rest of the crowd looked becomingly surprised.

"Can play any foul on me."

"But you bet we will. If you had beaten us fairly without that cracker, we would have paid, of course, but not now, oh no!"

"But yer'll have ter pay for der wine."

"Net much. Who ordered it, landlord?"

"Mr. Shorty," replied he.

"That settles it. We pay for what we order."

This provoked a laugh at Shorty's expense, and he saw that the tables were turned on him.

"Did you pay for der sleigh yer ordered?" asked Shorty, Jr., putting in his oar.

"You bet we did," said Gus.

In spite of the laugh that this raised, they felt that they had got partially even with the little jokers, and so rested contented for the while.

Shorty paid for the basket of wine with the best grace he could under the circumstances, and still considered himself a long ways ahead of his victims.

The affair, however, was destined to travel over town and create much talk and amusement, but resulted in their benefit, for a full house awaited the

jokers on account of a desire to see the mirthful heroes.

And during many parts of the entertainment various humorous allusions were made to the affair, by several members of the company, each one of which "took" with the audience.

The next night was their last one in Salt Lake City, but a first-rate house assembled, and everybody was at his best.

At the conclusion of the show Shorty was loudly called for, and finally responded by making his appearance, hat in hand, and dressed in his best. This call came especially from the galleries, for, as usual, he was the strongest with the boys, who had heard so much of him through the story papers.

"Speech—speech!" was the cry.

thing, but finally they managed to play a few jokes on him, although they were far from being so satisfactory as they could have wished.

"Oh, you duffs can't play nuffin on me," said Shorty, who occupied a seat just in front of them.

"I'll bet I could play something on you if I had a chance," said Kennedy.

"What?"

"I could play a stream on you if I had a hose."

"Hose joke is dat?" asked Shorty.

"Ken-e-dry it?" asked the Kid.

"What-a-squirt!" said Gus, and this broke up poor Kennedy.

The passengers became interested in the punsters and jokers, and those who were not engaged in watching the wonderful mountain scenery through

"I beg pardon, but you made a remark just as you dropped your tile," suggested Shorty.

"Oh, did I? Waal, I—I had a dream, an' maybe I torked in my sleep; I'm orful sleepy," and he yawned for the next two minutes.

"Dream, eh? What was it?"

"Waal, I thort I was with the devil."

"The devil you say!" said Shorty.

"Yas, fact, but I'm orful sleepy," said he, and again he yawned. "Wonder when they make up the bunks?"

"Oh, any time."

"How's that?" he asked, eagerly.

"Any time when yer want ter bunk."

"Waal, I'd like ter bunk 'bout now," said he, opening his mug for another yawn.



"Oh, papa, please don't," whined Shorty, rubbing his eyes. "Don't get married, papa, for mama says you mustn't," blubbered the Kid.

Shorty bowed.

"Ladies an' gents—an' boys: I's much obliged ter yer for yer kindness an' 'preciation of my show. I think it's a pretty good one myself, although I's got three or four chaps in it dat don't 'mount ter much on a sleigh-ride. [Laughter and applause.] They can't drive away from Lingham's ole Bergh. [Laughter.] He isn't as handsome as Gus Williams, but he's got more go inter him. But, jokin' aside, I shall remember Salt Lake City as long as I live, as some udder members of der company will, most like. Be good ter yerself an' der babies 'til I come back ag'in, an' I'll bring yer some worse performers den I got now, an' some worse jokes den Harry Kennedy gits off. Ta-ta!" he added, bowing himself from the stage.

A generous round of applause followed him, and the well-pleased audience dispersed.

From Salt Lake City the company started for Sacramento, California, where they were to play a week at the Metropolitan Theater.

But it is a long ride between the two places, and of course, to a certain extent, a tiresome one, although the accommodations on the Pacific road are all that could be asked for.

Of course the reader understands the gang well enough by this time to know that they would contrive some way to make the time pass lightly and pleasantly, even if it was done at somebody else's expense.

It was only a regular thing with them, and this occasion was no exception, for they were all in for fun of whatever nature they could originate upon the spur of the moment.

Shanks, Kennedy, Billy Barry and Gus Williams were continually watching for an opportunity to get in their fine work on the two Shortys, but they were continually on the lookout, expecting, of course, that they would try and get square for the sleigh-ride racket.

They tried for a long while without effecting any-

which they were passing, were enjoying the fun hugely.

But there was one chap that got on at Elko, who didn't appreciate anything. All he wanted was to be let alone and to sleep. But precious little of it did he get in that car, you may depend, for no sooner would he get into a doze than over his head would go backwards, where it would remain, mouth open, until some of the gang would drop a peanut or something into it, when up he would flop, and wonder what the deuce it all meant, anyhow.

But he was either too stupid or too sleepy to understand that the jokers were varying the monotony of the ride at his expense, and so after a while he would go through the same performance again, only to make fresh fun for the company.

And so the thing went on in various shapes until towards night, during which that unfortunate sleepy man kept growing worse and worse, and furnishing more fun.

Finally, Shorty took a seat just behind him for the purpose of forcing the fun. All eyes were quickly turned upon the sober little joker, for even those who did not know who he was, knew that there was a fund of live devilry in him.

The sleepy man, who had mashed a peanut only a few moments before, soon forgot the circumstance, and presently his head fell over backwards again, his mouth flew open, and the snore that he sent forth could be heard above the roar and racket of the train.

Shorty struck a sulphur match, and allowed the fumes to play gently around his nostrils, when he awoke with a jerk that dropped his hat into the joker's lap, and exclaimed: "The devil!"

Shorty handed him his hat with great politeness, looking as solemn as an owl.

"You dropped your cady, boss," said he.

"Oh, ah, thank you, sonny!" said he, making a grab for his beaver.

"The porter'll be in soon."

"Waal, young feller, wake me up when he duz come, will yer?"

"Cert," replied Shorty.

"Ah!" and with another yawn he fell off into another snooze.

Shorty waited until he was fast asleep, and then placing his mouth close to his ear, he yelled: "Change cars!" and instantly fell back into his own seat, and pretended to be asleep.

Mr. Sleepy leaped to his feet, but, of course, he saw nobody near, and the train was dashing ahead at the rate of forty miles an hour.

He looked wildly around, but nobody appeared to understand what he wanted any more than he understood the situation.

"Guess I must have had another one of them cussed dreams," he muttered, as he settled back into his seat. "Wish ter thunder that thar porter would make up the bunks."

In truth, they had not yet arrived at the station where the sleeping cars were taken on, but that made no difference to him. He wanted to go to bed anyhow.

Shorty woke up, or seemed to, just then, and again he went for him.

"I say, sonny, arn't it 'bout time fer that thar porter ter show up?" he asked.

"Oh, port's all right," replied Shorty.

"But why don't he show in?"

"Want him real bad?"

"In course I do—I'm orful sleepy."

"Well, don't yer know how der ole thing works?"

"Don't know's I do. Never went over this route afore. How does she work?"

"Simple as fallin' off a log."

"No!"

"Fact. Yer want ter go ter bunk?"

"Bad, sonny, bad," and he emphasized it with an-

other yawn. "I hearn tell that they made up bunks tight here in the keers."

"Oh, cert. Make 'em up any time yer want."

"But I want mine *now*, by thunder."

"All right, know how ter work it?"

"No."

"See that door out ter der end of der car?" he asked, pointing to the wash room.

"Yas," he drawled.

"Well, dat's it."

"What?"

"Der undressin' room."

"What for?"

"Der's where yer have ter go an' take off yer harness."

"Yer don't say so?"

"Cert. Now if yer want der port ter make up yer bunk, all yer got ter do is ter go in dat room an' take off yer duds, an' den come back ter yer seat again. He'll see yer an' 'll know it's a sign dat yer wants ter turn in, so he'll come an' make up yer bunk."

"Sonny, I'm 'bleged ter yer, I'll just do that little trick right off;" and as good as his word, he started for the little retiring room at the end of the car.

Shorty gave it away to several of those who sat near, all of whom had been enjoying the fun ever since it began, but he lost no time in changing seats, although he got where he could see the continuation of the fun.

In the course of five minutes the door of the little room opened, and out came that sleepy passenger, robed only in his undershirt and drawers, having hung his outer garments up in the room.

A yell of delight greeted him as he came down the aisle, but three or four ladies whom he had to pass sent up screams, and several of the passengers at the far end of the car yelled for the conductor or somebody to put out what they believed to be a lunatic.

But old Sleepy paid no attention to all this. He wanted his bunk, and returning to his seat, he sat down to await the appearance of the porter, who was to make it up for him.

Two or three passengers ran in different directions in quest of the conductor, porter or somebody, to have the lunatic removed, while the ladies felt it to be their duty to blush and send up little screams now and then, to convince the passengers that they had never seen a man in his underclothing before in their lives.

"Put him out!"

"Run him!"

"Git out!"

"What's the matter with you?" and various other calls greeted his ears.

But he heard only the last one.

"I'm sleepy, that's all's the matter," said he, looking around in astonishment.

"Git out!"

"Oh, ah! Put that horrible man out," said an old maid, who pretended to be horrified, but who was looking at him between the fingers of the hand she was holding to her face.

Just then the conductor entered the car, and going straight up to the sleepy undressed, he asked:

"What's the matter with you?"

"I'm sleepy. Be you the porter?"

"No; but what the devil are you in this undress uniform for?"

"Want my bunk made up."

"Guess you want to get your head made up. Now you get out of here on the double quick!" said he, seizing him by the nape of the neck.

"Lemme be!" yelled Mr. Sleepy.

"Come along!"

"Stop it or—"

He didn't stop to finish his expression, but drawing off, he hit the conductor a welt in the snoot that sent him over on top of the old maid whose modesty had been so terribly shocked.

"Don't lay much hands on me, stranger. I want my bunk made up, an' no nonsense 'bout it, either," said he, while the astonished official was picking himself up.

"Oh, I'll fix you," said the conductor, going out to bring in a big brakeman.

"Strangers, how is this, anyway?" he asked, turning to the passengers.

"You're out of order," said Gus Williams.

"Guess I'm regular, boss," said he, in reply; but at that moment the conductor returned with his fighting brakeman, and they went for him again.

A regular rough-and-tumble followed, in which the sleepy passenger, now fully awake, came out best, after which he made his way back to where he had left his togs.

The worsted conductor followed him, and soon became convinced that a joke had been played on the poor fellow. And he soon came out, wide awake and full of wrath, asking:

"Whar's that little cuss as showed me how ther old thing worked?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT indignant passenger, on whom Shorty had played the undressing joke, meant business when he walked into the car, and asked for the little cuss who had got him on such a string.

But both of the Shortys knew their business well enough to get down under the seats out of sight. So he walked back and forth making inquiries in vain, and offering to thrash everybody in the car provided he could only be shown the little joker.

But he soon made himself unpopular in the car, and gradually subsided. Once in his seat again, he soon forgot his anger, and fell into a snooze that everybody was thankful for.

Then Shorty came out, but there were no more jokes played that night. The "sleepers" were soon

after taken on, and with everybody in bed, they sped onward again toward Sacramento, where it will be remembered that Shorty's Varieties were to hold forth in the Metropolitan Theater for a week.

Probably the majority of my readers have ridden in a sleeping-car, so it is no news to them to say that there is considerable human nature developed in them during a night's ride.

There was heaps of it manifested on the occasion of this ride to Sacramento, and not a few were heartily glad when morning came.

Harry Kennedy, however, made the most of the fun, playing all sorts of ventriloquial jokes on everybody, except the members of the gang, who of course knew his racket.

First a baby was heard to squall, and then its mother would try to soothe it; then its supposed father would jaw and curse because it kept him awake, and suggested the advisability of chucking the squalling brat out of the car window.

Then the passengers would become disgusted and yell at them to shut up, and wait until they got home to have their quarrel; that it was bad enough to hear the kid squeak without having their chin-music mixed in with it.

Then he would imitate the barking of a dog, and there would be more cursing. In short, he kept everybody stirred up for a couple of hours by his art of imitating sounds, and when things began to quiet down a bit, he would again set the imaginary child to squalling and its imaginary parents to fighting about it.

Finally one of the passengers, who had been unable to get to sleep, sent for the conductor.

"Can't you keep those people quiet over there? I haven't slept a wink all night for their infernal fighting and that brat's wailing, and as though that was not enough, somebody has got a devilish dog in the car to bark," said he.

"A dog? You must be mistaken. We allow no dogs on the train," said the conductor.

"Well, you've got one on, anyway."

"Pete, have you seen a dog on this car?" he asked, turning to the colored porter.

"I seen no dog, sah."

"Well, you might have heard it. We all heard it, and not five minutes ago."

"All right; if he disturbs you again, I will have him fired out," and the conductor turned to walk away.

"Yip-yip-yip!" came the sharp tones of that dog again.

"There, hear it!" called the passenger.

The conductor walked in the direction of the sound.

"Anybody got a dog here?" he asked, looking first into one berth and then another.

But they all said no, and didn't say it very softly, either; and so the conductor was on the point of leaving the car, remarking to the complaining passenger that he couldn't find any dog.

As he spoke, the barking commenced again, and both the conductor and porter started for the berth from which the sound seemed to come.

It happened to be the berth of our old friend, he on whom Shorty had played the undress game during the day.

"Here, give me that dog!" said he, shaking him roughly to awaken him.

"Hey? What's the matter?" asked Old Sleepy, as the light of the conductor's lantern flashed in his face.

"You've got a dog here."

"Gotter what?"

"A dog."

"Whasser matter wiz you, anyway?"

"Come, hand out that dog. It's against the rules of the road to carry dogs on the cars."

"Stranger, be you drunk, or be I?" he asked, becoming fully awakened, although still confused as to what was wanted.

"Oh, don't bother! Where's that pup?" said the conductor, impatiently.

"Git out! Got no dorg."

"Yes, you have; I heard him bark, and he's keeping passengers awake."

"Who be you, anyway?"

"I am the conductor."

"Oh, is it my ticket you want?"

"No, I want that dog."

"I got no dog, I tell you, an' the next time I tell you I shall do so with my fist. Now see if you'll take a tumble. The idea of me having a dorg! What in thunder do I want of a dorg?" and he laughed derisively.

"Put him out!" shouted several.

"Kill der koodle!" yelled Shorty.

"Bounce him!"

"Waal, now, some o' you fresh roosters better come an' try it," roared the now thoroughly aroused passenger. "This is another one of these jokes as war played on me ter-day. But I warn you, better not try to braid the mule's tail."

"But you have a dog here and must give it up," put in the conductor.

"You're a liar! Does that sound natural to you?" said he. "Now, you just light out, and if I hear any more nonsense about a dog or a cat, or anything else, you'll see some fun, and don't you stand around here and forget it."

The conductor seemed puzzled. He knew that sleepy passenger was fully awake now, and he wished himself well out of the scrape.

"Well, if that dog makes any more noise, I shall put both of you out of the car," said he.

"Stranger, you're trying to braid that mule's tail I was speaking to you 'bout."

"You just remember what I say," and he turned to walk from the car, resolved to take no further notice of the matter when he once got away.

But he had not reached the door when Harry Kennedy commenced the barking again in imitation of the dog, and the passengers began to shout their displeasure.

There was no help for it now, and so, going for a couple of brakemen, he returned and ordered them to pull the poor passenger from his berth without ceremony.

He had fallen asleep again by this time, but they did not stop to waken him gently; but in less than two shakes of a dog's narrative, they pulled him sprawling out upon the floor, where the two brakemen and the porter held him while the conductor reached into the berth with his lantern to find the dog.

But, of course, there was no dog there. That indignant passenger was there, however, and the confusion and swearing occasioned by his being bounced was so great that everybody was up, and the females were screaming murder.

The conductor finally announced that he could find no dog, and ordered his men to let the abused passenger get up.

But no sooner had he regained his feet than he went for that gang, knocking them right and left, while the passengers got in out of sight, fearing he might take it into his head to give them a taste of his style as well.

Shorty and his friends were convulsed with laughter, of course, but none of them cared to get in the way of that fellow's fists.

He wasn't two minutes in clearing out that gang, and then he looked around to see if his work was all done. But there wasn't a mug in sight, and every curtain was closely drawn, although there were many anxious eyes peeping out from the cracks; eyes that were not a bit ambitious to get into mourning.

"Now maybe somebody else wants to pull me out of my bunk," said he. "Maybe somebody else thinks I've got a dorg."

He waited a moment, but there was no reply, and he got slowly back into his bunk, muttering as he did so:

"I told 'em how it would be if they tried to braid the mule's tail."

It is safe to say that nobody else made an attempt at that mule's tail during the remainder of the night, and having had all the fun they wanted, Harry and the gang soon after forgot their devilry and dropped off to sleep.

The next morning, after the bunks were packed away, and the passengers had a chance to look at each other, they were surprised to see that there was no baby on board, and no parents to jaw each other on account of it; and, in fact, there was no dog. They could account for it in no other way than that they must have got off somewhere during the night.

But if any of them should chance to see this account of the affair and remember it, they will understand that it was simply a clever trick by a very clever ventriloquist.

They arrived at Sacramento in time for breakfast, and as the train remained there an hour, nearly all of the passengers went to a hotel near the depot, and enjoyed a good wash and a square breakfast.

They were now right in the heart of the glorious climate of California, and such a pleasant transition was it that everybody was in the best of spirits; for coming down from the mountains into the beautiful valley, is like going from winter to summer in the space of three hours. Everything was in bloom and beautiful, and the passengers coming from the train, dressed in their furs and big ulsters, looked funny.

Among the others who went to the hotel for breakfast was our old friend who had made such a lively fight the night before when pulled from his bunk. He appeared to have had sleep enough for, at least, awhile, and was looking as fine as silk, considering what he had gone through.

But almost the first thing that had attracted his attention after he got out was a full-sized portrait of Shorty, printed on posters with which the dead walls were covered, as they also were with the pictures of other members of his troupe.

He stopped in front of one of them.

"Waal, snatch me bald-headed if that ain't the picture of the very little cuss that played the joke on me 'bout undressin'. What's his name? Shorty. Guess he's some sort of a performer. Let me see—'Shorty's Varieties,'—that's so; I've a devilish good mind to stop over to-day and see the show. Got nothing particular to do in 'Frisco," he mused, as he made his way into the hotel. "The mischievous little runt! Waal, it served me right for being so con-founded green;" and he laughed good-naturedly, for he was evidently one of those fellows who can take a joke and enjoy it, although he was mad enough at the time to have thrown the little joker from the cars.

He washed and walked into the dining-room for his breakfast, and, as luck would have it, the waiter gave him a seat directly opposite to where Shorty was sitting.

This didn't make Shorty ever and above happy, for he wasn't certain whether or not he intended to "chew him up" for "braiding that mule's tail."

He glanced at the others, and then took a look at Shorty. As he did so, a big, good-natured grin overspread his face, and Shorty was not slow to see it, and met it with another of his own.

The others observed these signs of amnesty, and the result was a laugh all along the line.

"Pretty good for you, young chap. You're a little tough every time," said he.

Another laugh greeted this, for they all remembered the occurrence and how ridiculously comical the man looked when he came out of the retiring room with nothing but his drawers and undershirt

on, expecting that the porter would at once make up his bunk.

"Oh, it's all right—I own up. Here, waiter, bring us a couple of bottles!" said he. "You must wet it with me."

"All right, we'll accommodate you," said Gus Williams.

The wine was quickly brought and a dozen glasses flashed with its effervescence.

"Waal, ole man, here's hopin' yer'll never need a bunk," said Shorty.

"Good, and here's hoping you'll never need a subject for a joke," said he, in reply.

This made them friends at once, and the breakfast was finished with the utmost good feeling.

"But how about that dog?" asked Shanks.

"Goldarn that dorg. Say, what sort of a racket was that, any way?" he asked, laughing.

"Didn't have any dog after all, did you?" asked Gus Williams.

"Of course not. There warn't no dog. But I wonder how them chaps feel who yanked me out of my bunk? Guess they got all the dorg they wanted."

"I saw the conductor as we came out, but he didn't see me," said Shanks, "for his eye had shut up shop for a few days."

"He don't want any more dorg."

"By the way, that reminds me that your berth was 'K' section '9.' 'K-9,' see?" said Harry Kennedy.

"What?"

"K-9, and that's why he got all the dog he wanted. See?"

"Waal, stranger, I don't understand Latin, but I s'pose it's all right."

He glanced down the table, but everybody belonging to the party was looking as sober as usual, for they had made it a rule never to laugh at any of Harry's jokes, and he concluded that he had only been speaking a little Latin. So the matter dropped, greatly to the disgust of Harry, who insisted upon it that it was a first-class joke, and deserved a good reception.

"All right. I'm dead in love with the whole lot of you, for I know you're full of it. I'm goin' to stop over to see your show."

"Good boy. Here's some tickets," said Shorty.

"No, thank you, I'm well heeled; I own a mine that pans out rich, and I can afford to buy my way. Fact is, I think I'll take the whole theater, just for fun, and let anybody come in for nothing. How much does the theater hold, anyhow?"

"About a thousand dollars," said Shanks.

"All right. Here's a check for a thousand, and it's my treat for this town," said he, taking a check from his book and filling it out. "There, ask the landlord if that's good," he added, handing it to Shanks.

By this time breakfast was over, and they all adjourned to the reading, smoking or bar-room. The idea that the stranger had proposed was a novel one, and with a proper advertising, it might create a sensation, so Shanks went to see the landlord of the hotel.

"Is that check good?" he asked, handing it to him.

He took it and examined it closely.

"Good! Is Jim O'Brine's check good? Well, I should say so. I'll give you the cash for it if you have any doubts. Why, he's worth twenty millions. He's a bonanza king. How did you get hold of his check?"

"Why, he's here," said Shanks.

"The devil he is!" and he turned to the register. "That's so. Here's his name. Where is he? He's just the man I want to see," and he added, after Shanks had explained about the check: "Big thing—big thing! That's him. He's full of such rackets as that," and he proceeded to tell him of several just such eccentricities.

The result was that everybody who presented himself at the box office that night to buy a ticket, was given one with the compliments of Bonanza O'Brine, and the house was packed.

Everybody knew O'Brine, of course, but they did not know, and could get no idea of what had prompted him to buy up the whole theater, and treat everybody who went to see the show.

By this time, of course, the reader knows all about the show, and the individual members of the company giving it, and they need not be told that it was a good one on this occasion, nor that it gave ample satisfaction.

The eccentric millionaire enjoyed it very much, and treated the gang to a wine supper after the performance was over.

And more than this, he gave them an especial invitation to call on him when they reached San Francisco, and promised to make their stay in that charming city as lovely as it could possibly be.

The next day he parted with them, but every paper in the city had an account of the affair the night before, and the consequence was that it was the whole town talk for the next four days.

But they did not allow him to leave until they had informed him all about the dog racket, and how it was played.

The thing pleased him immensely, and after seeing Harry Kennedy, he could understand it without any difficulty.

But while all this was going on, and they were enjoying themselves so well, Gus Williams was quietly thinking how he could get square with Shorty for that sleigh-ride racket at Salt Lake City, which the reader doubtless remembers.

At length he found a way, and at once set himself to work to perfect it.

It appears that a certain female trapeze performer, traveling with a combination of various kinds of talent, of which she was the best, came to grief in

Sacramento, and all of her traps had been left behind, and were stored in the theater.

Among these was an air spring which had been used to shoot her up about twenty feet into the air, where she caught a trapeze swing, and proceeded with her act.

The thing was out of repair, but still had strength enough left to bounce a person about ten feet into the air, and Gus, together with the other fellows who were victims to Shorty's Salt Lake City racket, at once set to work to put the thing in shape.

After working some time, they fixed the spring in the floor just where Shorty always placed his chair during his banjo act, (and he had the business down so fine that he never varied his position three inches), and had it all ready for the third night.

They worked the thing very carefully, and were delighted to see that he placed his chair directly over the spring when he went out to do his act with Shorty, Jr., and of course they stood ready to work it.

Shorty and his son were never in finer feather than on this occasion. There was a full house, and their previous act (his old monkey business) had been applauded to the echo, so they went on with a hurrah.

"Well, chile, how you was feelin' ter-night?" asked Shorty, as he placed his chair, and began to finger the strings of his banjo.

"Fine as silk, daddy. How you was a feelin' yourself?" asked the Kid.

"Feel jus' like flyin', chile."

"Is dat so? Well, I allus thort as how you war 'fly,' ole man. But I hear dat you an' Jimmy O'Brine hab struck it fat on anoder bonanza."

"Chile, I's sorry fo' ter say dat I am a bery rich man."

"Mus' be if yer feel like flyin', for dat is bery expensive nowadays."

"Yes, but it all depends on what yer flyin'; but if you hab your orchestrious in workin' order, we will oscillate Up in a Balloon' fo' a moment."

"De machine am wound up, daddy."

"Den let her go!"

They started off with a double banjo snap on "Up in a Balloon," playing beautifully, but not half so beautifully as it was destined to be played on them.

They had sung one verse and the chorus, and were just getting on to the chorus of the second verse when that spring was let off, and both of them shot upward like rockets and disappeared in the flies.

Both of them, however, had presence of mind enough to catch hold of the ropes belonging to the scenery, and were thus saved from falling back upon the stage.

But it was the most sudden exit that any actor was ever known to make, and the audience was left in doubt as to whether they would ever appear again.

With considerable difficulty they managed to get down, but before they could do so, there was another act on.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WHAT did it, dad?" asked the Kid, after they had got back to the stage again.

"I give it up, sonny, but I'll bet there was a racket in it," said Shorty.

"Well, I should say so."

"Gus Williams?"

"An' der gang."

"Gettin' square."

"For Salt Lake City."

"Yes, but what was it: powder?"

"Hang me if I know, but if we hadn't caught, ther business would have been bust."

"Gone up."

"Mashed."

"They worked it good."

"All right. We'll kill dem duffs next time."

"Yer bet."

And while they saw everybody on the stage laughing, they went to their dressing-room and proceeded to unharness.

It was the biggest job of getting "hunk" that was ever played on Shorty, and to say nothing of the fright it gave them, they felt very sore and sober over it.

And it was a mighty dangerous trick, too, and, as Shorty had said, if they had not saved themselves by catching the ropes up in the "flies," they might have been badly hurt.

But to tell the truth, the jokers had not calculated on firing or bouncing them up so high. They had not tested the power of the bouncer, and only guessed that it would shoot them up a few feet.

But when they saw the two runts going up like rockets, they were frightened half out of their wits, and only breathed again when they saw them catch and save themselves.

"Good Moses, what a bounce!" said Gus Williams, in a whisper.

"Heavens! Why, I thought they were going right up through the roof," said Harry Kennedy.

"Wonder if they have any idea what lifted them?" asked Billy Barry.

"I don't believe they have. But we had better get the trap out of sight before they come out, or they'll find out sure."

"That's so. Quick! get a screw-driver," and at it they went, succeeding in getting it out of the way, just as the two indignant Shortys came from their dressing-rooms.

The show was just over, and every one shot out of sight into their dressing-rooms, leaving Shorty alone behind the curtain.

He began to look around to see if he could find what it was that had bounced him so fearfully; but, of course, he found nothing.

While he was examining the flooring of the stage one of the scene snifters came along.

"Say, roxy, did yer see it?" he asked.

The man looked at him in surprise, and then began to look around the floor.

"Have you lost anything?" he asked.

"Nix; did yer see der bounce?"

"Me?"

"Yes; did yer see 'em shoot me up inter der flies?"

"Yes; didn't they do it all right?"

"Well, I should say so."

"Rather a dangerous act, aren't it?" asked the man.

"Well, I should crow dat it was."

"Ever get hurt doing it?"

"What are yer givin' me?"

"I only asked if you ever got hurt doing that act?"

"Bah! act!" exclaimed Shorty, in disgust, for he thought the fellow was giving him taffy.

"Yes, that's your regular act, isn't it?"

"Git out!"

"Well, I certainly thought it was. Didn't you ever do it before?"

"No, sir, I never did."

"Well, you did it first-rate."

"Yes, rather. Do yer know der snap?"

"I don't understand you."

"Der racket."

"I don't know anything about it."

"Don't yer know how they worked it?"

"I haven't the slightest idea; I was behind getting the flats in place."

"All right."

And Shorty turned on his heel and walked away somewhat disgusted.

He found Shanks in the box office.

"What sort of a finish do you call that?" he asked, as Shorty waddled in.

"Finish!"

"Yes; everybody was talking about it as they went out."

Shorty looked at him a moment suspiciously.

"Something new?"

"I should say yes. War yer in it, Shanky?"

"Me? No."

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I heard people talking about it, and I asked one of the ushers what it was, and he said that you and the Kid finished your banjo act by taking a flying leap up into the flies. How did you work it? Wires?"

"Bah! it was some sort of a job dat dem hams put up on us."

"What?"

"Fact. Gettin' hunk on Salt Lake City."

"The deuce you say!" and as Shanks was one of the victims of that sleigh ride, he laughed heartily over the affair, and wished he had seen it.

"All right for Gus an' der rest of 'em. See if I don't git hunk."

But this threat only made Shanks laugh the louder.

"Why, it might have killed us both."

"Yes; and you might have killed all four of us, when you fired that cracker between our horses, and made them run away and kick the sleigh all to pieces. Did you stop to think of that? This was only getting even with you."

"Even! Now yer see how sick I'll make dem duffs before I git done wid 'em. I'll make 'em eat mustard."

"All right; but you must expect to get a dose yourself once in a while, old man."

Shorty made no reply, and lighting a segar, he pulled his hat down so that it covered his eyes almost, and started for the hotel, thinking all the while what he could do to get square with the jokers.

Said jokers kept out of his way that night, feeling that it was best to do so, and that Shorty would be likely to feel more like laughing over the matter next day.

But they had many a hearty laugh over it themselves, and told it to everybody they knew, the result of which was that a reporter for one of the papers got hold of it and worked it up in the following style.

It greeted Shorty's eyes the first thing in the morning. It was headed:

"A NEW WAY TO END AN ACT."

"Of all the sensational ways of ending a comic act that was ever seen in Sacramento, we venture to say that the one employed by the celebrated Shorty at the Metropolitan Theater, 'takes the cake.' The two little fellows, while singing 'Up in a Balloon' last night, suddenly shot up out of sight, and did not appear again, and neither was there any explanation offered. But from what we have heard said by those who would be likely to know, we strongly suspect it was a joke not down in the bills, and was quite as much of an astonisher to the Shortys as it was to the audience. As near as we can learn, the whole troupe are a set of practical jokers, and that this 'bounce' was designed to pay off an old score. But it was rather a dangerous one to play, although we are happy to say that it produced no harm beyond a laughable fright. We doubt if Shorty will do this 'finish' again."

That really made the joke complete, and as Shorty always appreciated a good thing, even if it did go against him, he could but laugh after all was said and done.

"Best finish I ever saw in my life," said Billy Barry, the first to rally him on it.

"Yer'll see a finer finish den dat one of dese days an' don't whistle dat yer won't," replied Shorty.

"Bounce?"

"Never yer mind what it is, yer know I allus get's hunk."

"Well, who are you going to get hunk with in this case?" asked Gus Williams, soberly.

"All right, Gus, only don't try ter play such a rough snap on me again, dat's all. Why, yer might have broken our necks."

"Who might?"

"Oh, dat's all right, I tell yer."

"Of course; lay everything to me."

"It was the stage carpenter," said Harry Kennedy, "and we thought you worked up the snap with him."

"All right. Yer've got me dis time, but look out for der next time."

The matter was finished up with a segar, and a hearty laugh all around, after which it was allowed to rest.

From Sacramento they went to Lathrop, where they performed two nights to good business, and from there to Stockton for three nights, and then to San Jose, where, at this very "tart" opera house, they were billed for three nights also.

They had heaps of fun at San Jose, and met many friends in the "profesh."

Business was very good, and Shorty had to promise that he would return there for two or three nights with his show before he left again for the east.

San Jose is one of the brightest and most beautiful places in the United States, and is destined to be quite as large and important as San Francisco.

But it was at San Jose that there happened a little fun that I may as well tell you about, although there was nothing in it that partook of the nature of the boisterous rackets they generally had.

It was started after the performance, the last night there, and came up while speaking of the relative merits of the different pedestrians.

Gus Williams was contending that he could walk with O'Leary or any of them.

"You walk?" said Shorty, with a laugh.

"Yes, I walk. You never knew that I was a walk-ist, did you, Shortness?"

"I's seen yer walk up to de bar quite often, an' I knows yer can walk up ter get yer salary when 'der ghost walks,' but dat's yer best grip."

"No, sir. I have walked fifty miles without a drink," said Gus, with his old laugh.

"Den it's cock sure dat dere warn't no drinks nearer dan dat," said Shorty, at which the crowd laughed.

"What show was you out with, Gus?" asked Shanks.

"It burst up, of course, and he had to walk. That's how he knows he can walk fifty miles," said one of his friends.

"Yes, and that's why he walked all that distance without a drink," said Kennedy, and then there was another laugh.

"Oh, you can't walk for sour apples," said Shorty.

"No, they are strong enough to walk themselves."

"I don't see the appli-cation," put in Kennedy, after a struggle.

The members of the company, of course, took no notice of the atrocious pun, for they had long ago made it a rule not to do so, hoping to break him of his terrible habit, but the strangers present laughed and cried "good," which made Harry feel so good, that he at once "ordered them up" for all hands.

That gang of performers lost many a drink because they refused to encourage his jokes.

"I can walk yer myself, Gus," said Shorty, following up the subject.

"You? Why, I'll run a lame frog against you, Shortness," replied Gus.

"I'll walk yer for money."

"A match; make a match," said several, who stood around.

"Well, he's just about the right size for a match if you only put a little brimstone on his head," replied Gus.

"But that would be a dangerous thing to do," said Kennedy.

"Why so?"

"Because he is always getting into scrapes, and might go off."

"Oh, come off!" said Billy Barry.

But the crowd applauded, and several of those present said it was the best joke of the season, and again did Harry "set 'em up."

"I'll walk yer for shug!"

"How many miles!"

"Say yerself."

"I'll tell you what to do. We've got to lay over a day anyhow, so suppose we stay here and have a walking match; hire a hall, and have it done up in costume," said Shanks, who thought he saw fun in it.

"I'm yer angel," said Shorty.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Shorty. I'll walk you five miles for a hundred dollars, winner to pay for the hall, and handicap myself with the Kid."

"How?"

"I'll take the little runt on my shoulders, right straddle of my neck, and walk for the money with you. How's that?"

"Aren't you going it blind, Gus?" asked Billy Barry.

"Well, Shorty, Jr., is going to 'straddle' it," said Kennedy.

A grand laugh greeted this, and again did the bar-keeper string out the glasses upon the bar at Harry's suggestion. He had at last found a gang who appreciated his jokes, and he was willing to pay for the luxury.

"Der yer mean it, Gus?"

"Here's my shug," said he, pulling out a roll of bills.

"Here's a cover for it," and Shorty put up his hundred dollars, and it was given to Shanks, who acted as stakeholder.

The preliminaries of the match were then entered into, and the party broke up in the highest of spirits.

The next day Shanks found a hall, and employed a civil engineer to lay out a track in such a way that so many laps made a mile, and at noon everything was ready for the commencement of the funny contest.

A large number of their personal friends were there to see the sport, and when Gus made his appearance in walking costume, leading the Kid by the hand, he was greeted with a big round of applause. He was looking as fine as a daisy, although a trifle too stout for a long walk.

Shorty was also greeted when he put in his appearance in a like costume, but with more of a laugh, for he was a comical runt, and looked about as much like a walker as a turtle does.

A judge and time-keeper were appointed, the particulars all stated, and the men brought up to the line.

Gus took the Kid lightly by the hand, and he bounded right astride of his neck as lightly as a bird.

"Now, then, this is to be a square heel-and-toe walk," said the judge, "and the one making the five miles first takes the pot."

"And if neither of them makes it, the pot goes to the gang," said Shanks; and this novel proposition created a loud laugh.

"Are you ready?"

"All ready."

"Then go!"

Away they started at a lively pace, and amid a cheer from all sides.

"I've got der best of dis jigger, anyway," said Shorty, Jr., who was in for a five-mile ride at all events. "Go it, ole man!" he called to his daddy.

Gus shot right ahead of him, for Shorty, with his little duck legs, wasn't a very fast walker, of course, and when Gus had accomplished a mile, he was only two-thirds through with his.

But Gus was beginning to show his walk, or, rather the walk was showing on him, for with his handicap and the pace he was going, the perspiration was streaming from his body.

Shorty, Jr., was making all sorts of fun, and would occasionally wipe Gus' face and act the part of a jockey, urging him along.

"Brace up, Gus, and show yer style."

But Gus made no reply. He hadn't any wind to spare, while Shorty was pegging away as fresh as ever.

"Go it, ole man. I'm bettin' on yer!" cried the Kid.

"Go it, Shorty!" rang all over the hall.

"Why is Gus Williams like a man who is nearly busted?" asked Kennedy.

"Why is he?" somebody ventured.

"Because he is running Short-eh?"

"Shoot him!"

"Put him out!" and various other cries greeted him.

There was no bar in the place, and he should have known it before he ventured with a conundrum of that size.

At the end of two miles Gus was only about a quarter of a mile ahead, and showed hard work. One or two of his friends took a turn or two around the hall with him, for the purpose of encouraging him, while others did the same thing for Shorty.

"Don't hurry, Gus, you have got all day before you," said Billy Barry.

"Yes, and he'll soon have Shorty before him," said Kennedy.

"Billy, take Kennedy away. One handicap is all I can stand," said Gus, feebly.

At this point they both stopped and rested for about five minutes, during which time their friends gathered around and congratulated them, after which they started again somewhat refreshed, and with the understanding that they were to be allowed to do the last mile just as they had a mind to.

"All right; I'll do mine in bed," said Gus.

"An' I'll do mine in a row boat, with some other chap at the oars," said Shorty.

But this was a quiet racket that he had put up with the judge and stakeholder, the reason for which will presently be seen.

At the end of the fourth mile Gus was still about a quarter of a mile ahead, and now that the judge informed them that they could go as they liked, either walk, run, or trot, Gus broke into a dog trot and was loudly cheered.

Shorty, however, kept right on in his walk for a while longer, and then started on a run around the hall, making a very good show, because he could run better than he could walk.

And there was something he could do better than either one, and when he had nearly caught up with Gus, who was now badly winded, he gave a whoop-la! and throwing himself over on his hands, he began turning "cart wheels," spinning over and over and going twice as fast as he could run.

Gus protested, but it was no use. He had a right to do it just as he liked. Shorty kept up this comical movement until he had got ahead of Gus, and then landing on his feet once more he started at a brisk run, coming in the winner by five laps, or nearly a quarter of a mile.

The hall rang with applause, and Shorty's friends gathered around him with their congratulations, while he puffed and regained his wind.

Gus, of course, stopped when Shorty was hailed as winner, and after a growl about not agreeing to walk against a cart-wheel, he retired in disgust.

The affair created lots of fun in San Jose, and the next morning they all took the train for San Francisco, where they were to play two weeks, and where Shorty would be near Oakland, the home of the mysterious dwarf hermit, whom he was so anxious to see.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHORTY and his company arrived in San Francisco all right, after the walking match between himself and Gus Williams at San Jose, in which he managed, by a sharp trick of his, to come in a winner.

Here they were at last in the great city of the Golden Horn; a larger city, according to its years, possessed of more beauty and romance, and more nationalities than any city in the world.

They were billed to play two weeks at the Bush street theater, and as they always went to the front in everything, so they put up at the Palace Hotel, and prepared not only to give the 'Friscoans all the fun they wanted, but to have, as usual, as much as they could squeeze out of the place for themselves.

One or two of the company had been there before, and of course acted as guides for those who had not, and in order to get at the fun and interest of the place, a person must be well acquainted with it, or follow some one who is.

That night they were greeted by an overflowing house, and every member of the combination put in his or her best licks to sustain their reputation and make good for succeeding nights.

And they succeeded as usual in making a hit, sending the people away in the best of spirits, and securing first-rate notices in all the papers next morning.

In this connection Shorty managed to have a personal notice published in the San Francisco *Call*, wherein the mystery of his birth and his successful career was dwelt upon in a half serious manner, making a very readable story.

The reader will remember that he had seen an article in a Kansas City paper, from a correspondent in San Francisco, in which the romance of a rich old dwarf residing in Oakland was given, and which awakened much interest in Shorty's mind.

True, the fun and mischief that he had been engaged in since then had partially knocked the sentimentality out of his head, but still he had kept the matter entirely to himself, and now that he was so near Oakland, this was his object in having the piece published, hoping it to meet the old man's eye and thus pave the way to an acquaintance between them; and to make sure of its reaching him, he directed a marked copy of the paper to him, after which he allowed matters to rest for awhile.

"Dis dad business," he mused, "is der wus I ever tried ter climb. Wonder if I'll ever find der ole rooster, anyway? Wonder if I ever had a dad? Well, if dis ole duffer don't pan out well, I'll feel all broke up an' jes' like a poor orphan."

The next day was spent by all hands in visiting places of interest in and around the city, and an excursion down the bay was planned for the following.

They found a large number of friends and acquaintances in the city, and there was one continual round of pleasures indulged in day after day.

"Why is this city like a certain fancy drink?" asked Harry Kennedy, one day.

"Now hold on, Harry. You have done very well since we have been here, but don't presume upon our forbearance on that account," said Shanks.

"Oh, that's all right," said Harry. "But why is this city like a certain fancy drink?"

"Well, why is it?" asked Gus Williams.

"Because it has a Branch (o) Mint in it."

They were standing in the bar-room of the "Arlon," at the time this outrage was perpetrated, but instead of throwing tumblers, bottles, and chairs at him, they all turned sadly on their heels and walked away from him.

One would naturally think that these continued rebuffs would have choked him off, but in spite of everything, Harry would have what he was pleased to call his little joke.

Five or six of them visited the Chinese quarters together and beheld this remarkable people in all the glory of their native squalor and beastliness; and to a stranger it is a very interesting although repulsive sight, for these strange people, although temperate, industrious, and saving, and in many respects quite as ingenious as any people in the world, yet socially they are but little above the grade of cattle, living huddled up in little rookeries, a dozen sometimes in a room not large enough for one, and in a state of filth that is revolting to decency.

Shorty was full of his fun, and to tell the truth, the Chinese were almost as much interested in him as he was in them; and as he passed along through the narrow streets on which they live, they would laugh and talk in their own language, and evidently regarded him as a natural curiosity.

"Why are these people like good actors?" asked Kennedy, turning to Shorty.

"Now, Harry, hold on. I'll give you one more chance if you'll cork up, eh?"

"Oh, this is a bully conundrum."

"Ask old pigtail over there," suggested Billy Barry, pointing to a Chinaman who was ironing some clothes in front of his "washee-washee" house across the way.

"No—no, there's a law agai:st killing Chinamen," put in Gus.

"Oh, it won't hurt him any more than it would us."

"But they might rise up and drive us out of their quarters if he should tackle them with one of his conundrums."

"Oh, give him a chance; he hasn't got off one of his 'good things' ter-day," said Shorty. "Why are they like good actors, Harry?"

"Because they always take their—cues, see?" he replied, referring to their pigtails, properly called queues.

"Great!"

"Immense!"

"A perfect staggerer!" said the gang, and they gathered around him, shaking his hand and congratulating on his effort.

"Didn't I tell you it was good?" he asked, proudly.

"The best conundrum I ever heard—in the Chinese quarters," said Gus.

"Washee—washee?" asked the Chinaman before referred to, as Shorty approached him.

"Nixy—nixy, ole pig tail," replied Shorty.

"How's biz?" asked Gus, while the others gathered around to see the Celestial iron.

"Heap hunkly. Good washee, you, me?"

"Take your pay in rats?"

"Rattee belly good, so be," said he.

"I've got a fat pup I'd like to exchange for washee—washee."

"Heap funny."

"No; this is our funny man," said he, turning to Kennedy. "He can make a horse laugh—let him try it on you."

Meantime several Chinamen and women had gathered around to see the strangers, some having things to sell, and others offering to shave them or pare their corns. In fact, whenever there is a cent to be made, you may bet your boots that the Chinaman is on hand to make it.

But none of the gang cared to patronize them, although several of them gave pennies and bits to them for the sake of hearing their lingo, or to see them do something, and in a very short time they became great objects of interest to the Chinamen, and yet were getting their money's worth in fun out of them.

"Say, ole washee—washee," said Shorty, addressing the ironer, "lemme iron one of them duds; I'm boss at it."

"Me no; spoil; makee damee bad all same likee Melican damee foolee."

"Git out! Here—here's a dollar for yer if I spoil anything," and he handed it to him.

The sight of a dollar, more than he could earn in two days, was too much for him, and so with a Celestial grin he handed him the flatiron to experiment with.

Shorty seized it and began to go over the shirt at a lively rate, cheered on by the others and creating much laughter among the Chinamen who stood around, and such a chattering and gesticulating as they kept up was a sight for a comic artist.

But Shorty was raising the mischief with Hi-Ho's ironing by his wild and erratic movements, and he began to fear that he would get more than his dollar's worth after all, so he got closer to him as if to restrain him.

But whenever he placed his hand on the ironing table, Shorty would poke it with the hot iron, causing him to jump and say something in Chinese, which in turn made his neighbors laugh all the louder.

"Hellee, holee ion! Allee sploil!" yelled Hi-Ho, dancing around in alarm, and trying to get Shorty to give up the iron.

"Yer be hung, ole pig-tail; guess I know der biz;" and just then he ran the iron against a dish of starch, knocking it from the table.

Hi-Ho stooped to pick it up, when Shorty placed the hot iron upon his stern, causing him to leap about ten feet in the air, and yell seventeen kinds of bloody murder.

"Hellee cussee! hellee damee! oh—oh—oh!" he cried, rubbing himself with both hands, and dancing about.

A perfect roar of laughter went up.

"What's der matter? Givin' us some Chinese circus?" asked Shorty. "What's der matter?"

"Heap hellee! oh—oh—oh! Gible lion," he added, taking the flat-iron from the little joker. "Me no."

"Ah, what's der use gettin' mad wid a little orphan like me?"

"Go debel! me no," said Hi-Ho, again resuming his ironing with one hand, while with the other he still rubbed the place where Shorty had put in the fine work on his person.

"Oh, then, yer won't go? Well, I s'pose I shall have ter go without yer, but I hate to part company with yer, for I know der devil would like ter have yer along."

"Heap smartee, makee damee lass, so be," groaned the Chinaman.

"Nonsense; he was only doing it in Melican style," said Gus.

"Me gittee dloar, so be," said Hi Ho, and a smile of triumph stole over his face, evidently obliterating all thoughts of pain.

Well, they went all through that curious quarter of the city, picking up any quantity of fun. In fact, it lasted them until nearly dark, by which time they had played so many tricks on the Chinamen that they became indignant, and, finally, arming themselves with wash-boards, flat-irons, etc., they banded together and charged upon the gang, driving them out of the quarter on the double-quick.

The Kid had jumped out of his coat when one of them seized him, and was running like a little sucker, while a wash-board boarded Shorty on the star-board side of his nut, and things were as lively as a country circus.

"Go it, dad; but if the devil takes der hindmost, I's gone, sure!" cried he.

One of the irate Celestials was close upon Shorty,

and was about to mash him with a wash-board, when he turned and butted him head-over-heels into the mud, after which he gained on them a little; but if the police hadn't gone to the rescue, the affair would not have turned out half so funny as it began.

They gave Chinatown a wide berth after that, you bet.

Nothing of particular importance happened that night at the theater, with the exception of a "bang-up" house and a first-class performance; but on their assembling at the "Arion" they found a crowd who had been to the show, and were full of life and laughter.

There was one man in the company who attracted their attention, for he was a character, such a one as is never seen anywhere but in California.

He was a gold miner, and had evidently "struck it rich" lately, and was full of fun and money, which, of course, made him a great favorite in a place like this.

He was a regular out-and-outer, and no mistake.

He had been to the show and was full of his talk about it, and when Shorty and the gang entered the place and were pointed out to him, he nearly upset himself.

"Waal, by thunder'n lightnin'!" said he, "if them ere little cusses as played on them banjos an' cut up so arn't jist the rats of all creation, yer bet. Wonder if they won't drink."

Wouldn't they?

In a few moments the stalwart miner was on good terms with them all, and what was best of all, he actually roared at Kennedy's jokes, and treated all hands as well.

"Waal, smash my rocker if it arn't durned curious how yer can chuck yer voice 'round ther way yer do," said he.

"Oh, it's the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is to practice," said Harry.

"Yer don't say so!"

"Fact."

"Waal, I s'pose so; but I reckon as how life's too cussed short ter take all that yer need if Natur don't do anything for yer," said he, laughing.

Again they "smiled" and laughed over the miner's enthusiasm.

"An' as for you, yer little runt," said he, turning to Shorty, "I only wish we had yer down in our mines."

"Where are you located?" asked Gus.

"Whar am I what?" he asked, quickly.

"Located."

"Tork it in United States, mister; I'm a regular, but I never panned out much on foreign tork."

"Well, what I mean is, where is the place; the claim that you have been working."

"Oh, now I strike gravel. Waal, I'm 'way up here in the mountains; up in a place they call Hog's Back," said he.

"Good place?"

"Waal, yes. We do pretty well up thar. Thar's only one thing agin it."

"What's that; no dust there?"

"Lord bless yer, thar's lots of dust thar, but it's up so high."

"Real estate is high there, eh?" put in Kennedy.

"Ho-ho-ho!" laughed the miner. In fact, he laughed so heartily, that Harry was on the point of asking everybody up to take a drink.

"No, this's mine," said the miner.

"Because you are a miner," said Harry, and again did the miner roar.

"Darn my eyes if yer arn't the alfredist lot of jokers ever I seen. Come up an' wet yer clay! Come up, everybody!" he yelled, with a voice that could have been heard a mile. "I only wish I had ther whole darned lot of yer up in the Hog's Back."

"How high is this Hog's Back?" asked Gus.

"High! waal, now, mister, I arn't no church member, an' maybe yer won't believe what I tell yer. It's up in ther Sierras."

"Well, how high do you say it is?"

"Bout twelve miles," said he, soberly.

"What! Oh, you mean it is about twelve miles from here there."

"No. Why, it's a hundred an' fifty."

"But you cannot mean that Hog's Back, where you have been mining, is twelve miles above the level of the sea?"

"Waal, I don't know nothin' 'bout the level of the sea, but it's nigh onter twelve miles high, for sure."

"Nonsense; that's higher than any mountain in the world, my dear sir."

"Waal, that's nothin' ter me, I'm only torkin' 'bout Hog's Back."

"Never knew a hog to get his back up so high as that before," said Kennedy.

"But only think of it, my dear Christian friend. A person could not breathe at such an altitude as twelve miles," said Gus.

"Couldn't breathe?"

"No, the rarity of the air would be so great that a person could not live."

"That tork's higher nor Hog's Back, stranger; leastwise it's too high for me."

"Don't you understand me?"

"Bust my rocker if I do!"

"What I mean is, that at such a height as twelve miles, the air would be so thin that a person could not breathe it, and it would not sustain life."

"Oh! Waal, it is putty thin, yer bet."

"So is that story," said Billy Barry, aside.

"How thin is it?"

"Waal, it's so thunderin' thin that yer have ter fan it inter a corner when yer want ter get a square breath."

This, of course, produced a rousing laugh.

"Then, of course, you have no clouds up there?" suggested a gentleman standing near.

"Oh, yes, we do; heaps of 'em."

"I don't understand it."

"Waal, I don't, but it's Gospil. Maybe yer don't believe me, jus' 'cos I'm unfortunate enough not to be a church member; but I'm givin' yer a little history now. Yer see, I've got a cave in ther side of the mountain whar I live, an' many times when I go home I have ter push a big cloud away from the front door afore I can git in. Fact."

That took the cake, and amid a wild burst of laughter, Shorty headed the gang, and shook the miner solemnly by the hand, as did the others.

"Mr. Man, yer der boss," said Shorty.

"Dat takes der flapjack," said the Kid.

"My dear sir, I believe every word you say. You have no occasion to belong to a church. You are good enough without it," said Gus.

"The belt belongs to you, sir," added Shanks, who, like the others, shook his hand solemnly.

"The cake is yours," put in Billy Barry.

"I say, you may be a miner by occupation, but you are of age in this matter," said Kennedy; and so they all shook hands with him, at the same time making some complimentary remark.

"Boys, I'se much 'bliged ter yer for yer good feelin's. I war brung up all right if I don't move in ther best society. But I am awful sensitive like, an' this touches me. Now if everybody'd said they didn't b'lieve it, or that it was a cussed lie, why, I should ha' felt so bad that I'd had ter flog somebody," said he, with a show of feeling.

"And it would serve them right," said Gus.

"That's ther kind of a kyote I am. Now everybody come up an' wet ther gravel," he added, seeing himself among so many friends.

"Are there no other drawbacks to Hog's Back?" asked Shanks.

"Waal, yes; thar's one more drawback," said the miner, after a moment's reflection.

"What is that?"

"We lack blastin' powder."

"Oh, to work in the seams in order to get at the gold, eh?"

"No; the gold's all right. We can get at that easy enough; but it pans out in such dreadful big lumps that we can't get it away, an' if we only had powder we could bust 'em up so we could carry 'em—see?"

"Well, that is a drawback, and no mistake. Just about ruins the place, I presume?"

"Never'll mount ter much till powder gets more plenty," said the truthful miner.

This was the straw that broke the camel's back; and after shaking hands again, they took leave of him and went to their hotel, laughing and talking over the matter all the while, but voting that this guileless miner was the boss liar of the world.

On arriving at the hotel, they found the clerk and several of their friends talking earnestly over an event that was to take place there the following afternoon, being no less than the marriage of an old bachelor by the name of Lord, who was a boarder at the hotel.

There were several elements of fun in the affair, and his friends were discussing them when the gang arrived, for the old fellow was a general favorite; and when it became known that he was about to put his head into the matrimonial noose, after having resisted it so long, it created both surprise and interest.

The lady whom he was about to marry was what might be termed an old maid, having sought in vain for a mate until the "mate" was nearly off her bones, but having lately inherited quite a handsome fortune, the old man Lord was the first to see her good points and to propose marriage.

This of course awakened a lively interest, and it was resolved not only to give him a good send off; but it was also understood that if some sort of a racket could be played on him, it would be well received, by his friends, at least.

Shorty listened to it all, and as the thing suited him to a dot, he came to the front and suggested that there would be fun at that wedding.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE marriage of old Bachelor Lord, spoken of in the preceding chapter, as to take place the next afternoon in the parlors of the Palace Hotel, where Shorty and his gang were also stopping, was more than an ordinary affair.

Mr. Lord, a dead ripe old bachelor, who had all his life been one of the boys, and not one to be caught by any of the husband-fishers, was to marry Miss Snickers, an angular female of an uncertain age, who would always have been Miss Snickers if she had not inherited a snug fortune at last, which so changed her "figure" that Mr. Lord thought it superb, and at once proposed matrimony.

He was tolerably "well fixed" himself, but he probably concluded that the two fortunes joined together would be much better than one, and so arrangements were made for the wedding.

Shorty had often seen the old fellow, and knowing there was fun in it, and fun expected by the old fellow's friends, took it upon himself to work a racket on him.

And the wedding was to be no slouch of an affair, either, for the old fellow was not only a high liver himself, but, whenever an opportunity presented itself, he was sure to "set 'em up" high for his friends; and what greater opportunity would he ever have for a "spread" than on his wedding day. So he gave orders to have the affair bang up in every respect.

And just bang up it was.

About a hundred invitations were sent out, and at the appointed time the parlors were crowded with

his male and female friends, and a jolly, solid lot they were, too, being some of the best to be found in San Francisco.

Mr. Lord and the bride were waiting in one of the side rooms off from the parlor, ready when the master of ceremonies should inform him of the minister's arrival, to walk into the main parlor, where the ceremony was to take place.

Finally all was in readiness, and he led forth his blushing, timid bride.

The gay old bachelor was going at last, and a smile rested on the faces of his friends.

But some of them were smiling "louder" than others, on what account will presently be seen.

They stood up before the minister to face the matrimonial music, when there was a slight commotion near the door, and Shorty and the Kid, Shorty, Jr., dressed like two little schoolboys, walked into the ring.

"Oh, papa, please don't," whined Shorty, rubbing his eyes, while both bride and groom, as well as his friends, started up in astonishment.

"Don't get married, papa, for mama says you mustn't," blubbered the Kid.

"Oh, ah!" exclaimed the bride, and she flapped over fainting in the bridegroom's arms.

"Don't do it, papa," whined Shorty, while the Kid boohoo'd right out.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the minister. "I thought you were a bachelor."

"Good Heavens, I—I don't know," stammered poor Lord, while great beads of sweat started out all over his face.

"Too thin, old man—too thin!" replied several who were in the conspiracy.

"Come home with us, papa, mama wants yer," moaned Shorty, who was acting his part admirably.

"Who are you?" he finally mustered the courage to demand.

"Yer know who we is, papa."

"Go away; I don't know you."

"Too thin—too thin!" chorused the jokers.

"I cannot perform the ceremony until this matter is cleared up," said the minister, taking a seat a little way off.

"Shame—shame!" cried several of the lady guests.

"But I assure you that I—"

Just then Miss Snickers revived, and broke in upon his explanations.

"Oh, you horrid, deceiving wretch! Will somebody take him away from me!" she cried, trying to disengage herself from poor Lord.

"But, my dear—"

"Don't dear me, sir, don't dare to do such a thing, you horrible old creature you," and breaking away, she ran into the adjoining room, followed by the bridegroom and several of her friends.

"Hoopa, how's dat for bustin' up a weddin', hey?" asked Shorty, suddenly changing his whole appearance, as also did the Kid, and dancing two or three bars of a breakdown, after which they darted from the parlor and were soon lost to sight.

A wild shout of laughter followed, not only from those who were in the racket, but from the others, as they all saw at once that it was only a joke that had been played.

Even the minister laughed heartily, and followed the perplexed couple for the purpose of explaining matters.

But this it took him some time to do, so indignant and mortified was the bride, and so utterly nonplussed the groom. He soon recognized the handy work of several of his chums, however, and mentally resolved to get even with them.

Nearly an hour elapsed before they faced the minister, and even then they were both in a very nervous condition.

But they made a go of it that time, and the matrimonial knot was tied before anything else could happen, after which they received the congratulations of their laughing friends.

"Oh, I'll get good and square with you fellows for that trick," said he, as he shook hands with the hotel clerk and several others who laughingly surrounded him.

"What the dence had we to do with it?" they all asked, looking honest and innocent.

"I'll bet you a basket that you put up the job. Who were those little rascals?"

"Why, you heard what they said."

"Oh, that's all right. Where the devil did you find two boys who could act their parts so well? that's what I want to know."

But all the reply he got was another big laugh all around, and so he concluded to let the matter drop for the time being and attend to his new-made wife.

That afternoon, after the wedding banquet, they started off on a short wedding trip, leaving the jokers behind to laugh and tell the story until nearly everybody in San Francisco knew it, and it was even the talk of the town when they returned, a fortnight afterwards.

But Shorty and the Kid got out of it all right, as usual, and it was a long time afterwards that Lord learned who the clever "children" were, who so nearly broke up his wedding.

And during the time they were doing a rushing business in the show line, the theater being packed every night. Frisco is one of the best "show towns" in the world, and when a bang-up performance visits the place, they go away with a bag full of money.

After becoming acquainted with the city, they all voted it to be the finest in the land, and nearly every day some member of the troupe had a pleasant adventure of some kind or other.

Harry Kennedy and Gus Williams were walking out one day when they came upon a Chinaman who had just killed a calf and was on the point of dressing it.

"Let's have some fun with him?" said Harry.

"All right," replied Gus, who was never known to be backward for any such a thing.

And so they approached the Chinaman, who was doing his butchering right on the street, and stood near by as two ordinary spectators of such a scene might have done.

"Killee?" asked Gus.

"So be," replied the Chinaman, sharpening his knife.

"Allee dead?"

"Muchee killee; knocklee blains lout, so be; heap goodee meat," and he proceeded to skin the dead animal.

As he inserted the point of his knife for the purpose, Harry imitated the mournful bleat of a calf so naturally that the Chinaman started back in alarm.

"Why, the calf is not dead yet," said Gus.

The startled butcher made no reply, but approaching nearer, he cautiously stuck the point of his knife into the calf again.

A prolonged and mournful "b-a-a-h!" seemed to come from the body.

"Me flix him," muttered the Chinaman, and seizing his ax, he gave the dead calf three or four more thumps on the head; but at every blow Harry would make it give forth a bleat that was almost human in its agony.

Finally the butcher threw down the ax, and stood a moment looking at his victim.

"Dead allee yite now, guess," he finally muttered, finding the calf as silent as it was motionless.

Then taking the knife, he proceeded to resume his skin game. But the moment he touched the body, Harry made it bleat again.

"Cussee dameel!" he exclaimed, again starting back.

"It is still alive," suggested Gus.

"Heap tough likee bull. Me flix," said he, and seizing the ax, he proceeded to chop off the head of the calf. "Lare, see die now."

"That ought to kill him, sure," said Gus. "Now try him."

"Allee gone where woodbine jumpee now, bettee you," said he, with a confident grin, and again he proceeded to cut the skin.

But that same mournful bleat came from the severed head, and a more bewildered and demoralized Chinaman than he was would have been hard to find.

And of course both Gus and Harry acted their parts, appearing to be quite as much astonished as he was.

The butcher stood a few feet away and looked at the carcass, and presently several other Chinamen gathered around, to whom he evidently explained the remarkable affair.

This caused quite a commotion among them, and it was evident that they regarded it as a miracle, and so moved slowly away.

But the butcher was not disposed to give it up without another trial, so he cautiously approached and gave the body a kick with his heavy wooden shoe, causing it again to bleat.

This caused still greater sensation among the spectators, and they ran further away, calling out: "Ying-ye-ying-ye!" which, in the Chinese language, means "bewitched."

In fact, the butcher seemed to think so, too, for he stood some time contemplating it before making another move, and then he proceeded to take up the head by one of the ears, and to remove it a few yards away.

There was no reply to this treatment, but Harry at once prepared himself to continue the fun, so when the Chinaman again attempted to skin the calf, he again made the head bleat, and it sounded just the right distance away.

This was too much for the butcher, and dropping his knife, he started on a run to catch up with his frightened countrymen, yelling "Ying-ye!" at the top of his voice.

Harry and Gus walked away, laughing at the fun they had had, and so long as they remained in sight, the Chinaman had not ventured back to the dead calf again. How it ever eventuated, they never learned, but it made lots of fun for themselves and friends.

And at another time Harry and Shorty were out seeing the sights, when they happened upon an old Irishwoman who had a fish stand near the market. Harry went for her.

"Are these salmon fresh?" he asked.

"Yer roight they are. Tuck out o' the wather only yesterday," said she.

"Oh, what a lie! We've been here a week!" one of the salmon seemed to say.

The woman leaped back about three yards, and seemed completely broken up.

"Do you hear what they say?" asked Harry.

"Howly mother!" she exclaimed, hastily crossing herself. "Did they spake?"

"Well, I thought so."

"Be jabbers, take the whole lot for nothing; I'm done," and she started away as fast as her two big feet would carry her, while Harry and Shorty walked to a poultry stand.

"Fresh?" asked Harry, pointing to a chicken that looked suspiciously blue.

"Oh, yes; that's a fine chicken," said the man.

"Only killed yesterday."

"He's lying like thunder! We've been here so long that we stink!" one of the chickens seemed to say, whereat the dealer's hair arose on end until it pushed his hat off.

"Let's get out of this," said Shorty. "No talkin' hens for me."

"Me neither," and away they went, leaving that wonder-stricken poultry dealer to recover the best he could, and sell out his stock for whatever he could get. But it completely cured him of lying.

In the meantime Shorty had been at work with a detective to get at the old dwarf recluse living in Oakland, and whom he strongly suspected might be his dad.

The detective had been over to reconnoiter and see if he could get at the old man, but had been unable to do so, and now the question was, how should they work it?

"He has got three or four dogs that are as savage as the very devil, and I hear he has an ugly habit of covering people with a shot gun who approach his house," said the detective.

"I'll tell yer how we'll work it," said Shorty.

"How?"

"We'll get somebody who can throw a lasso. You'n I'll go an' shoot der dogs when they come out, an' when der ole rooster comes out wid his shot gun, have this chap cover him wid der lasso; get him on a string."

"Oh, nonsense! Why, we could all be arrested for such a high handed outrage as that, don't you know?"

"Well, all right."

"All right!"

"Yes. I've got der shug ter get out all right, an' maybe that'll be der only way we can get at der ole duffer, for if he 'rests us, he'll have ter show up, and den I can interview him. See?"

"It would be a hazardous undertaking."

"All right. Take three or four fellows along an' swear he tried ter shoot us."

"Well, if you will brace up to it, I'll get the fellows to work it up."

"Good 'nough. Go ahead."

And so it was arranged to lasso the old fellow, after which he was to proceed to find out whether he was his dad or not.

But before the affair was perfected in all its details, the engagement of the troupe had been concluded, and a rest of a week was entered upon, this being agreed upon beforehand, as the reader will remember.

Well, one day the party was made up to go over to Oakland (just a few miles from San Francisco across the bay) for the purpose of capturing the old hermit.

But Shorty had taken particular pains to keep the whole thing from his company, for he had been "rigged" enough on his dad business, and so nobody knew of the expedition.

The detective acted as guide, and led them directly to the house, a little stone affair, standing back two or three rods from the road and pretty well hidden by trees. It was a lonesome-looking place, but Shorty was bound to make it lively for a little while at least.

A careful reconnoissance was first made, and the man with the lasso was stationed where he could string the old fellow just as soon as he made his appearance, while the others stationed themselves in a bunch near the front gate.

Everything being ready, Shorty fired one chamber of his revolver to attract the attention of the inmates.

Nor was he long in doing so, for hardly had the echoes of the shot died away before three big ugly dogs came barking and tearing from the house, and made directly for the crowd.

But half-a-dozen revolvers were out, and a shot or two from each crippled the dogs, and they skulked yelping out of sight.

The next thing on the programme was the appearance of the little old hermit. Out he came, shot-gun in hand, and espying the gang, who instantly began to scatter to escape the scattering shot, he up gun, and would have fired had not the noose of a lasso at that instant settled over his neck, and pulled him over backward.

It was a complete success so far, and before the old fellow could get himself out of the predicament he was in, three or four of them had pounced upon him, disarmed and bound him so that he could do no further harm.

"Help—help—help!" he shouted. "Here, Turk, here, Bloody, here, Lion!" he called, to his dogs, for he had no idea of giving in.

"Oh, your dogs have got all they want," said the detective.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in a voice squeaky with anger; "are you robbers? Do you come here to rob me?"

"No. What do you mean?"

"By what?"

"Allowing your savage dogs to pounce upon strangers who may happen to pass your house."

"You are robbers—trespassers!"

"We are neither."

"How came you here, then?"

"We were simply passing along to see the country, and chancing to fire at a bird on a tree by the side of the road, were attacked by your ferocious dogs."

"It is false."

"It is true; and when you were on the point of firing upon us, a handy lasso brought you down. I am an officer of the law, sir," said the detective, displaying his shield.

Shorty had during the time been intently watching the queer little old man, and had taken no part in the business, but now he came right to the front.

"Oh, go light on him; he's an old man," he said, kindly.

The hermit turned to look at him. There was certainly considerable resemblance between them which they all observed.

"What do you intend to do with me?" he presently asked.

"Nothing if you will apologize for your assault upon us," said the detective.

"Never!"

"Then I shall have to arrest you."

"Arrest me! I thought you were robbers, and had a perfect right to assault you."
 "The law will not excuse you, sir."
 "Oh, let up on him, officer. Of course he thought we were robbers," said Shorty.
 "Yes, and I'll make you all smart for this piece of business, see if I don't," said he.
 "You had better try it."
 "I say, pop, what der yer think of me?" asked Shorty, thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and standing before him.
 "Think of you? Why, that you are just as bad as any of 'em, and that you are a set of ruffians," he snarled.
 "Did you ever have a kid?"
 "A what?"
 "Did yer ever have a son an' lose him?"
 "Never, you little scoundrel. What do you mean by such a question?" he demanded.
 "Well, my name's Shorty; dat's all der name I know for myself, an' I'm lookin' fer my dad. Been all over der country for him, an' as yer jist fill der bill, I thought I'd ask yer, dat's all. Are yer cock sure?"
 The old fellow was silent for a moment, and kept his eye fastened on Shorty.
 "Where did you come from?" he asked, finally.
 "New York."
 "How old are you?"
 "Give it up. Between thirty and forty, I guess."
 "And you don't know who you are?"
 "Nix; der yer?"
 "I have a strong suspicion," said the old hermit; but he didn't look a bit loving as he said it.
 "Who am I?"
 "Unbind me first."
 "But will you be peaceable toward us?" asked the officer.
 "Of course I will. What can an old man do in the presence of so many armed ruffians?"
 And while they were unbinding him, his keen black eyes seemed to burn into every face as though he wished to remember them.
 "Where can I see you to-morrow?" he asked of Shorty.
 "At der Palace Hotel, 'Frisco. Call for Shorty."
 "I'll call for him," said he, turning toward his house, and waving them away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SHORTY returned from Oakland, where he and his party had captured the little old hermit whom he strongly suspected was his dad, back to San Francisco, with feelings which can better be imagined than described.

Never before had he had such an adventure as this one had been, and never before had he met with a person who seemed so much like himself as the dwarf hermit did; and by the time he had reached 'Frisco, he had almost made up his mind that he had found his father, although the meeting between them that had been arranged for the following day at the Palace Hotel, would possibly determine it.

On his arrival he paid the men whom he had employed, and enjoining secrecy upon them, he retired to his room with the detective, where, over a bottle of wine, they discussed the situation and the probabilities. The detective had by this time, of course, become familiar with Shorty's history, and so they talked and talked.

The members of his company were all laying off for a week's rest, and were enjoying themselves very much, preparatory to going upon the road again on their homeward trip, and a jolly good time they were having all around.

Shorty, however, was dead in earnest about the business of finding his dad, now that the prospect seemed so bright, and took but little notice of what his friends were doing. He was too much in earnest about it to care for fun, and kept as much away from the gang as possible.

The next day, at the appointed hour, Mr. Burwick, the hermit miser, appeared at the hotel, although he was not alone. On the contrary, he had a court officer with him who had warrants for the arrest of Shorty and several others who had helped capture him the day before.

"What's this?" asked the detective, who had braced up to Shorty all through.

"How came you in this stew, Harry?" asked the court officer, addressing the detective.

"Why, it's regular," replied he.

"Nixey. The old man's got you all dead down. Go hard with you, I'm 'frad."

"I don't care. My man's got shug, and besides, we can make out a good case."

"All right. But you know how it is. I've got to take you in."

"Oh, of course. Go ahead."

While this was going on, Shorty and the indignant little old hermit miser stood looking at each other.

"Got yer back up, old man?" asked Shorty.

"Yes, and I'll send you up, never fear. If you think you can play your rowdy jokes on me, I'll show you that you can't. Officer, take them in," he added, turning to the pompous fellow who accompanied him.

"Where yer goin' ter scoop us ter?"

"I shall be obliged to take you before a police justice over to Oakland," replied the officer.

"Yes, and if he don't give you six months he's a fraud," piped the miser.

"Say, ole duf, I'll bet yer ten ter one he don't give us six months," said Shorty, placing his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and swaggering up to him.

"Ah! possibly you think that you have money enough to get you out of it, but I'd have you know that I can put down dollars for your cents all day

long; I am bound to have justice. You came out to my place, and raised the very devil; killed and wounded my dogs, lassoed me, and had things all your own way for awhile. But now I come to the front, and we will see who laughs last. Take them in, officer."

"Better send for your friends, Shorty," said the detective.

"All right, I'll—"

He started to go in search of Shanks.

"Hold on! Stop him, officer!" said the old miser.

"Give the little fellow a chance."

"A chance! Did they give me a chance yesterday? Not much. Don't let him go."

"I'll go with him. Where do you want to go?" he asked, of Shorty.

"Oh, only ter see my pard."

"Where is he?"

"Round here somewhere."

"All right. Come along," and he and Shorty started for the bar-room.

Here he found Shanks and several other members of the gang, and taking him aside, he told him in as few words as possible all about the affair, and that he was now under arrest, and was about to be taken before a police magistrate.

Shanks was taken aback, but of course he braced right up to his runty partner and had the money with him to see any sort of a game and go one or two better on it.

But the other fellows got wind of it and followed along to see how the old thing would work, and in two hours from then the whole party was over in Oakland before one of the police justices, there to answer to the charge of assault with intent to do bodily harm and commit robbery.

The hearing was before the justice who had issued the warrant, and the plaintiff was the first, of course, to tell his version of the story. It conformed in general with the particulars of the case as given in the preceding chapter, although he gave it a very high sensational coloring.

Then the justice turned to Shorty.

"Well, sir, what have you got to say to this charge?"

"Der old rooster's off," said Shorty.

"He's what?"

"He's gone crooked."

"Explain yourself, sir."

"Well, jedge, I'll tell yer all 'bout it; I'm Shorty."

"Oh, you are, eh? Well, I should say your *soubriquet* was well taken."

"Yer've heard of me, eh, jedge?"

"You are in the show business, I believe?"

"Dat's me, jedge."

"Well, what has that to do with the unprovoked assault which you perpetrated upon this peaceable old man?"

"Jedge, we didn't 'sault him, an' I've got witnesses here ter prove it. We came over ter Oakland ter see der place an' take a little airin'; we had guns wid us an' occasionally took a pop at things we see flyin' 'round, and when we got near dis ole rooster's she-bang we popped off, and out came his dogs ter chaw on us. Now, jedge, yer know dat we arn't no dog meat, jedge, an' so we pulled out our guns an' pegged at dem bloody kloodles. We fetched 'em, in self-defense, mind yer, an' den out came his nibs wid a shotgun ter go gunnin' for us, see? Well, one of der gang he had a long shoe string what yer call it, a lasso, an' he caught der old duffer on der fly; dat's all."

"It is false, jedge. They tried to make it out that they were in fun after they had got me down and half strangled," said the plaintiff.

"Of course we didn't want ter hurt der ole lunatic after we felt sure dat he couldn't hurt us," said Shorty.

"Did they rob you?" asked the justice.

"No; but I think their errand was to kill my dogs, so that they could get at me at some future time," said he.

"Nixy, jedge—nixy. Der ole man's off," said Shorty.

"What did they say to you?"

"One of them—this ruffian here," said he, pointing to the detective, "attempted to make me believe that he was an officer."

"And so I am," said the detective, showing his shield to the judge.

"So I see. Well, what else did they do?"

"Well, this little rascal, he attempted to make believe that I was his father," said the dwarf, looking sharply at Shorty.

"What did you mean by that?" asked the judge.

"Well, jedge, I'll tell yer. I'm a double an' twisted orphan. I was found; I don't know as I ever had a dad, but it strikes me dat I must have had one some time, an' for der last year I've been trying ter find him. I's well fixed, jedge, an' I guess der boys'll all say I'm no slouch. I started out on dis last racket wid one of der best companies dat ever humped der backs behind a curtain. But I went more for ter find my dad den anything else, for my pile of shug is solid. I've struck many leads, but dey didn't pan out good, an' when I seen dis old duffer, I thought I'd pump him ter see what he had ter say, an' if he'd fill der bill; dat's all, jedge."

"But, jedge, think of the insult," said the little miser, earnestly.

"Oh, I can't see any insult. You had no business to keep dogs about your place that would attack strangers that did not trespass on your premises," said the judge.

"But they did trespass, your honor."

"That does not appear. And I must tell you, sir, that this is not the first time that I have received complaints regarding your dogs. I shall discharge the prisoners, and receive any complaint they may make against you for assault."

"What!" exclaimed the old miser.

"The case is closed."

"Bully for you, jedge!" exclaimed Shorty.

"Do you wish to make a charge against him?" asked the justice.

"No, jedge, I'll let up on him, if he'll tell me who he is," said Shorty.

"Oh, you have no right to ask that, unless he chooses to tell you."

"Well, jedge, I haven't found my dad yet, an' as he fills der bill best of anybody I's seen yet, I'd kinder like ter know who he is so as ter rest my mind."

"That is no affair of the court. If you do not wish to make a charge against him I'll call the next case."

"Whoop her up, jedge; I'll let up on der ole rooster. Guess he's not der wust chap in der world, if he does live away from everybody."

The justice waved them all away, and proceeded with his regular business.

Shorty approached the little old man, who seemed entirely dazed at the way the case had turned out.

"I say, pop, give us your flipper," said he, offering his hand.

"No, sir, never; for although I have failed to receive justice, I cannot but think that the whole affair was a gross insult."

"Nixy, pop, nixy; let's be friends; I'm one of der gang, I is, an' if you ain't my dad, it's no reason why you shouldn't be my friend; I'll buy you some more dogs."

"Who the devil are you?" he asked, after gazing at Shorty a few moments.

"Why, I'm Shorty, der tough; I tole you who I was yesterday. Now, honest Chinaman, didn't you ever have a son that you lost somewhere?" said he, coaxingly.

"I—I don't know what to make of you. There is something strangely familiar about you—you say you came from New York?"

"Dat's me, I a New York cut, I is."

"And you are between thirty and forty years of age?"

"Dat's der way I reckons it, but I isn't certain; I was found somewhere near New York an' lived in der poor-house for a few years, den I worked out an' faked my way in der show biz up ter now."

"How long are you going to remain in San Francisco?" the old man asked, after a few moments' silence.

"'Bout a week longer, an' den I start east again wid my gang. But when I show here in Oakland, yer must come an' see me. Here's a ticket dat'll push yer right ter der front," said he, offering him one.

The old man took it in a dazed sort of a way, and after a few moments' silence, extended his hand to Shorty and promised to visit the show when it came to Oakland, after which they separated and Shorty and his friends returned to San Francisco.

It was the unanimous opinion of the gang, that if Shorty didn't find the old fellow to be his father, he would never find the man who was, for there certainly existed a very strong resemblance between them.

However, they celebrated his escape with a dinner, and the detective received a good boodle for the part he had taken in the affair, and parted with Shorty on the best of terms, and once more all hands felt just like "gripping the golden graft."

"I say, fellows, said Harry Kennedy, seeing a chance to get in an impromptu conundrum, "why is Shorty like a cannon that was used last Fourth of July?"

"Because he has got a great bore with him," said Billy Barry, pointing to Harry.

"Because he *kicks* when loaded."

Gus Williams did that.

"Because he can take in a ball."

Shanks fired that one off.

"Because he hasn't found his dad."

The Kid let that one go, and they laughed.

"No, you have not got it yet," said Harry.

"Well, why is he like a cannon that was used last Fourth of July?"

"Because he was *discharged*. See?"

"Oh-ho-ho! Will somebody load Kennedy up with giant powder and discharge him?" was the general cry.

Well, that passed off all right, and the next day they were all to start off with a hunting party up into the mountains where it was expected that they would encounter some large game, such as lions and grizzly bears, and they all pretended that they were anxious to strike just such game; something worthy of their borrowed rifles.

Both Shorty and Shorty, Jr. were to go along, for they had ideas of hunting quite as large as the other fellows, even if they were several sizes smaller than they were.

It was proposed to be gone three days, and on their return, it was all arranged to play two nights in Oakland, after which they were to return to San Jose, and then to take in the smaller towns on their way back to the east, including many cities of importance which they had skipped in going out.

They arrived at the station where they were to set out for the hunt, and it was not only a jolly, but a peculiar hunting party, if ever there was one. Scarcely one of them had ever fired anything stronger than an airgun or a champagne bottle, and yet they all had an idea that they were mighty hunters.

Gus Williams was armed with a Winchester repeating rifle; Shanks had a rifle and a shotgun, together with a brace of pistols; Harry Kennedy had two rifles, two pistols, and five hunting knives; Billy Barry had a big elephant rifle, two pepperbox revolvers, and a harpoon, and Shorty had a small rifle and a revolver, while the others were quite as pro-

miscuously armed. As for Shorty, Jr., he had a bunch of big fire crackers.

But there were three or four regulars in the party; men who were not novices at the business, and they were becomingly armed and guided the whole expedition.

And so they started out into the forest to slay whatever might cross their path. The regulars soon left the novices behind, for they were too full of the devil to do anything but cut up, and knowing that they had only come out for a lark, they left them to themselves, and started up among the foothills for game.

"Why are we like a person who has the advantage and will not take it?" asked Kennedy, at the first opportunity he had to get in some funny business.

little duck legs would not permit them to keep up with the other bold hunters, and in running away from one bear, they ran right upon another one, who stood on his hind legs ready to receive them.

But they all managed to get away but Shorty, and before he knew it, the bear had seized him in his fore paws.

"Help—help—help!" yelled Shorty, while the Kid stood like the others, paralyzed with fear.

Gus Williams was the first to recover, and rushing up he began to empty his revolver into the bear's head, while Billy Barry recovered and plunged his harpoon into his body. Shanks also rushed to the front with a pair of revolvers, and in a half of no time, and before the brute could get a fatal hug on

other one of quite as serious a nature, in which an old she bear and her three cubs caught them almost as bad as before.

They came upon a beautiful clear pool and concluded to go in for a swim. The other hunters had gone away again, leaving them alone, and so they stacked their arms, peeled themselves to the hide, and plunged into the limpid waters for a frolic and swim.

And they were having a splendid time, when an old bear and three cubs suddenly put in their appearance upon the edge of the little lake.

There was a sudden and awful sensation, of course, and they got as far into the water as possible. But what was their dismay at beholding the bears attack their clothing and commence to tear it in pieces.



Again father and son embraced, while the others applauded heartily. Then Shorty introduced the others to his father.

In an instant he was covered with half a dozen rifles, while Billy Barry poised his harpoon as though to drive it at him.

"Hold on! I weaken!" said he.

"That's the only way to fix him," said Gus Williams.

"Oh, let him get off one more, for a bear may kill him before he gets through with the hunt," suggested Shanks, dropping his rifle.

"Well, I don't know. I fear there is no such good luck in store for us," said Gus. "But go ahead. Why are we like a man that has an advantage and will not take it?"

"Because we are for bearing. See?"

Every man in the party fell to the ground, while Kennedy went on to explain his joke, and contending that it was a first-class one. But they all gradually revived, and continued their journey into the woods, although it was solemnly agreed among them to shoot Kennedy full of lead if he attempted such an outrage again.

They were plodding along, joking and telling stories about their experience in hunting, when they were suddenly startled by a thundering growl, and found themselves confronted by a big grizzly bear, who evidently wanted something to eat.

Have you ever seen fellows git up and git on the double-quick when suddenly confronted by some imminent danger? Well, if you ever did, you never saw such a stampede as took place on this occasion. They all threw away their rifles and ran as though the very devil was after them, although just at that moment Harry Kennedy was telling of his adventures in India, where he had killed eight or ten Bengal tigers.

Such a scattering and skedaddling was never seen before, although the bear made no attempt to follow them. They had seen him, and heard him growl, and that was enough.

Shorty and the Kid were of course behind, for their

Shorty, he was filled so full of bullets that it would have paid to work him as a lead mine.

The grizzly weakened, and Shorty escaped; Shanks pulled him away, and at that moment up came bold Harry Kennedy, the tiger-slayer, and began emptying his revolvers into the dead body of the bear.

"Are you hurt?" they all asked of Shorty.

"Not much, I guess," replied he, faintly, as he staggered to his feet.

"Ah, nothing like knowing how to put in a few fatal shots," said Kennedy, boastfully.

"Why, he was dead before you came up," said Billy Barry, pointing to his well-planted harpoon.

"Dead? Why, you fellows are all broken up. Wasn't it my shot through the head that did the business? Of course it was. I lay back, watching for a good shot. On, I understand this sort of thing," he said.

Harry received the grand laugh on that occasion, if he never did before.

But the other hunters—the regulars—had been attracted by the shouting and the firing, and had started to return to the company, when they came upon the other bear, the one that gave them the first fright, and a few well-directed shots brought the old fellow down, after which they hastened to see what had happened to the gang.

They congratulated them upon killing one of the largest grizzlies ever seen, and although every one of them, with the exception of Shorty and the Kid, claimed the honor of killing him, they said that the honor was great enough to go all around and give a piece to each one.

The skin of that grizzly was stuffed, and is now on exhibition at the American Museum on the Bowery, New York, and to this day, if you will only listen to it, each individual member of that hunting party will point to it and claim the honor of having slain it.

But a little while after this adventure they had an-

And it didn't take them long to do it, either. Gus Williams' pants were torn apart, leaving them two separate legs, while his coat and vest were also torn up the back in quite as uncommendable a manner. But he came off the best of any of them, even at that, for Shorty's clothes had been attended to by the cubs, who not only tore them, but chewed them to pieces.

Well, after they had accomplished all the mischief they could in that way, they knocked the rifles over, discharging one of them, so that the ball whizzed over the heads of the bathers, creating even a greater panic still.

But the report frightened the bears away, and after remaining in the water about half an hour longer, they ventured out to gather up the shreds of their clothing. What a sight it was.

And wasn't there some red-hot cussing? Bet that there was and you'll win.

A portion of them took up their rifles and stood on guard, while the others got into what there was left of their clothing as best they could. But what a sight they were as they started back to the station.

Some of them had their clothes tied on with withes; others had it half on; some didn't have a half of a suit left, and altogether it was the sickest and most comical-looking crowd that walked on top of the earth. In fact, they couldn't help laughing at each other in spite of their misery.

But they never stopped for any more "sport," they had all got a belly full, and arriving at the station, they took the next train for civilization, you bet.

They got back to San Francisco without any further mishap, fully satisfied, but scarcely knowing for a certainty whether they had been hunting bears, or whether the bears had been hunting them. But at all events they had all they wanted, and preparations were at once made to resume business, the first place to show at being Oakland, where Shorty had

enjoyed such a sensation while searching for his dad.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE excitement attending the bear hunt, as recorded in the preceding chapter, was quite enough, as may well be supposed, to keep the members of Shorty's company in talking material for several days.

Harry Kennedy even tried to make puns upon it, but was frowned down, and given a chance between life and death for attempting to perpetrate one of them.

Shorty's trial in Oakland, for the racket he played upon the dwarf miser, Mr. Burwick, will also be re-

having one of the manager's tickets, he was shown to one of the best seats in the house.

Great was the astonishment of the citizens at seeing the old fellow at a place of amusement, for as long as he had lived there, they had never known him to do such a thing before. In fact, he never went anywhere where he was likely to meet many of his fellow men.

Shorty espied him through the peep-hole in the curtain, and was delighted.

"Now, duffs, I want yer ter put in yer best licks," said he, addressing his company.

"All right. Come along, fellows, Shorty wants us to thrash him," said Harry Kennedy.

"What?" exclaimed Shorty. "What's der matter wid yer?"

true that the little fellow was looking for his father, the chances of his having found him at last were good.

Shorty waited for him at the door after the show was over, and the greeting between them was very cordial, attracting so much attention from those around, that they exclaimed:

"Shorty has found his dad, sure enough."

"Three cheers for Shorty and his dad!" were given as the two started toward the hotel.

"I guess der old man's got him dis time for sure," said Shorty, Jr.

"They do look much alike," said Shanks.

They were all going toward the hotel, following behind the interesting couple.

"Why is Shorty like—" began Kennedy.



The massive curtain shivers, rustles downward, falls and shuts out from view our friends Shorty, Shorty, Jr., and Shorty's Dad.

membered, and that after he was discharged he made friends with the old fellow, and gave him a ticket to the show when he should come to Oakland, which he promised to attend.

But the great conundrum was yet unsolved, whether this little strange old man was his father or not; and although Shorty had given it considerable thought since his escapade, yet he somehow felt that he was quite as far from knowing who he was as he had ever been in his life.

If this person was not his father, was it half-way likely he would ever know who that personage was? But there was something about this mysterious man that drew him towards him in spite of the rebuff he had received at his hands, and he was more than a little curious to know if he would actually make use of the ticket he had given him, and attend the performance.

After the rest and rackets they had enjoyed in San Francisco, it is no wonder that the members of Shorty's troupe took gladly to the road again.

According to agreement, they went to San Jose first, where they showed for a night to a thumping house, having left an impression behind them, when there before, that was better than all the advertising they could do; and from there they went to Oakland.

Here they had another good house, for their reputation was abroad in the land, and wherever they went the "shug" awaited them.

Shorty's anxiety of course was to see whether little Mr. Burwick would be there or not. But he did not know that he had been shadowing him ever since the day of the trial, and that he had employed several different agents in learning all he could regarding him. Such was the fact, however, which proved that the old fellow was quite as much interested as he was himself.

And about a quarter of an hour before the performance commenced, he put in an appearance, and

"Why, you said you wanted us to put in our best licks, didn't you?"

"Well?"

"Well, our best licks would be licking you. See?"

"Harry, you are not well," said Gus Williams.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I know you are not or you wouldn't get off such sick jokes."

"I should say so. Why, that joke's so sick it can't go alone," said Shorty.

"Oh, you fellows can never see a point," said Harry, turning away in disgust.

Well, the performance went on, and was quite as good as usual in all respects. But when Shorty came out with the Kid to do their double banjo act, (where they both occupy one chair) he put in some extra licks, more for the benefit of the old man than for the audience in general, who were bound to be satisfied, and he sang that old song of his, the parody on "Baby Mine."

I'm lookin' for my daddy,
Baby mine—baby mine,
I'd even take a Paddy,
Baby mine—baby mine.
I've been skippin' o'er the hills
With it printed on my bills,
I have sought him in gin mills,
Baby mine—baby mine,
I have sought him in gin mills,
Baby mine.

This is only a sample of it, and it made a hit, not only with the audience, but with the old man for whose benefit it was sung, and everybody noticed that he laughed heartily, and for the first time in his life, so far as they knew.

In fact, he seemed to be another individual entirely, especially when Shorty was on the stage, and the audience were not slow in discovering that there was something between them, and if it was really

"Police—police!" shouted Billy Barry, and then they all forsook him, leaving him walking alone, hugging his unborn conundrum.

It was rather rough, but they often served him in that way, for he always had a joke or conundrum for anything imaginable.

"I'll get that conundrum in on them if I am hung for it," he muttered, as he walked on alone.

Meantime Shorty and his guest went to the hotel, where they went to a private room for the purpose of having a talk.

Shorty, at Mr. Burwick's request, went over the whole story of his life, giving the serious part of it, as the reader has long known it, from his earliest recollections to the present time, and the little old fellow gave him the closest attention, interrupting him frequently to ask some particular question.

To look at them as they sat there together with their hats off, they certainly looked very much alike, barring their ages, although the old man was about a head the tallest.

"Well, what der yer think, anyhow?" asked Shorty, after he had finished.

"Well, sir, I think you are indeed my son," said he, impressively.

"What! Say it again, an' say it slow," said Shorty, striking an attitude.

"Since first I saw you I have taken great pains to observe you and ascertain certain points, and the result is that I have come to the conclusion that you are my long lost son and heir," said he.

"Der yer mean it?"

"I do."

"Cock sure?"

"I think I am."

"Whoop! Hi—ho—whoop! Come ter my arms, my dad, my lost dad!" exclaimed Shorty, rushing with open arms into the open arms of his parent.

Mr. Burwick was somewhat taken aback, but he did not hesitate, and after holding each other in ere

brace for a minute or two, they uncoupled and shook hands for at least five minutes.

"I really believe it. I do—I do."
"So do I, dad—so do I. Whoop! let's call in der gang an' set 'em up," said he, going toward the door.

"No—no, wait awhile. Let us be sure beyond a doubt before we let anyone know of our conclusions. I have a long story to tell that may unravel the mystery surrounding us both. I was born in England, and came to this country about forty years ago. I inherited a handsome fortune from my parents at the death of my father, my mother having died several years before. I came to this country, and like a fool fell in love with a pretty face belonging to an adventuress. She knew I was wealthy, and in spite of my dwarfed figure, she consented to marry me. For a year I was as happy as ever mortal was. A son was born, but so much like me in look and person that she hated it. Business called me back to England for a short time, and I left her in New York, well provided for.

"During my absence she met an old lover of hers, and after robbing me of all they could get possession of, they abandoned the child somewhere and fled together. I never saw her afterwards, but I heard that she died in poverty years afterwards in Paris, and she left a written statement, referring to the child that she had left with a woman to take care of. You may be sure that I exhausted every means of finding that woman, but she too had either died or disappeared from all who had ever known her, although I learned that she in turn abandoned the boy whom I had begun to regard as dead, and whom I finally regarded as lost to me forever.

"Filled with remorse and soured against the world, I roamed everywhere in quest of rest and peace. Finally I settled here and have lived the life of a recluse, preferring that to the society of men and women against whom I had become so soured. Here I have lived until now, possessed of a large fortune well invested, but caring nothing for it beyond present wants and the pleasure of getting it, although I have, unknown, given large sums for charitable purposes. But now a new life seems to dawn upon me, for I believe I have found my son."

"Dad, put it there! I'll bet a thousand against a rotten egg dat I'm yer kid," said Shorty, again shaking him by the hand.

"Thank Heaven, I feel that you are," said he, with much emotion.

"Everything corresponds exactly an' we can prove it more by goin' ter the shebang whar I war fust picked up. I went there once an' had a long talk wid der ole folks. They said dat some years ago a little old man came there inquirin' for me, an' dat he had a wart on his nose."

"Where was that—at a place on Long Island, near New York?" the old man asked, quickly.

"Yes, Yaphank or Coram, or some such a place."

"Coram, that's the place."

"An' ever since I've been lookin' for a little ole man with a big corn on his bugle," said Shorty, laughing.

"Allow me to say that I at one time, some twenty years ago, had a large wart on my nose."

"Is dat so? Whoop her up some more!" and Shorty felt so good that he kicked his hat up to the ceiling.

"It was at Coram; I remember it very well. But they could give me no information whatever regarding you."

"Yes, so dey said, but when we had a talk over ole times dey remembered it. Oh, I'll double der bet dat yer my dad," and again he kicked his hat.

"That was the last place I ever visited in quest of you. How strange—how strange!" said the old man, thoughtfully.

"Yes; an' only ter think of my readin' 'bout yer in a paper, an' makin' up my mind dat yer was my dad."

"Strange indeed. And in you I see myself in my own youthful days; although I never took to the show business, I can remember well the pranks I used to cut up when I was a boy, and I should continue to love such fun had I not become soured and disgusted with the world."

"Dat's it. Yer my dad, I know it. Lemme go an' bring in der boys, an' der Kid."

"Well, I should rather not, my boy; but—"

"Oh, let her rip. Der gang's had der laugh on me lots of times, an' now I want 'em ter see dat I've found my dad, sure. Whoop!" he yelled, and rushed from the room.

He found the majority of his company in the bar-room, laughing and joking over the prospect of Shorty's having found his dad.

"Duffs, come up!" he shouted.

"What?"

"Come up an' see my dad. I've got him sure dis time. Come, I'll interduce yer. Come, Kid—come an' see yer grandpop."

Laughing and joking, they followed him up stairs to his parlor, where he presented Shorty, Jr., to Mr. Burwick first.

"Kid, shake yer grandpop's flipper."

"My dear boy, I am glad to see you," said the old man, taking him by the hand.

"Dead sure thing?" asked the Kid.

"I have no doubts whatever on the subject, I am glad to say. We have been talking the matter over, and our life stories agree in every particular," and again father and son embraced, while the others applauded heartily.

Then Shorty introduced the others to his father, and he shook hands cordially with them and complimented them upon the parts they had taken in the evening's performance which he had witnessed. He was especially complimentary to Harry Kennedy, and this so elated him that he attempted several times to

crowd in that conundrum that they had choked him off on before.

But they succeeded in heading him off every time, and he was forced to give it up after all.

And a very pleasant evening they had of it, for the old man gradually broke through his reserve, and showed some of the Shorty blood most unmistakably, although not much could be expected, considering the circumstances of the case.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning before they separated for bed, the old man remaining at the hotel with his newly found children.

As for the company, they would gladly have disbelieved it, but in spite of themselves they were forced to believe that Shorty had at length found his dad for certain.

But what was he going to do with him, now that he had found him? That was a question that neither Shorty nor Mr. Burwick had thought about as yet, but Shanks and the others looked somewhat blue over the matter, fearing that it would break up the jolly old combination.

The next day, however, father and son had a talk over the matter, and it was agreed that the old man should settle up his business and remove to New York, where he would arrive just about in time to join his children at the finish of their trip, which Shorty was prevailed upon to continue back to New York by what is known as the "middle route."

And once more they were on the road, bound eastward, the same jolly, joking gang as ever, bent on two things—making fun and money, although for a while there was a change observable in Shorty, and he was more thoughtful, and less inclined to those practical jokes that had made him famous.

But this mood did not last him long, and by the time they had reached Omaha he had recovered his spirits and was himself again, as nearly every member of the gang knew to their sorrow.

"Why is Shorty like—"

"Slug him!" and Harry Kennedy, who had not yet found a chance to get in that conundrum, dodged from half-a-dozen different things that were hurled at him.

This last attempt took place on board the cars between Omaha and St. Louis, and at a stopping-place when there was no noise, he had attempted to get it in again.

"Now, hold on, duffs. Dat's 'bout der fiftieth time dat Kennedy's tried ter work in dat conundrum. Now let him spit it out," said Shorty, standing up on his seat.

"Oh, Lord!" they all groaned.

"But maybe it's good. Give him a show."

"Give him a club."

"Give him a rope."

"Make him sign the pledge never to put another conundrum," suggested Shanks.

"Give it to us, Kennedy."

"Be quick about it," said Billy Barry, thrusting his fingers into his ears.

"Wait until the cars start and then whisper it," suggested Shanks.

"Go ask the passengers in the next car."

"Write it out and send it by mail," and so they went on chaffing him until the train started, and they had not yet received that dreadful conundrum.

Harry sat back in his seat, disgusted but not disheartened.

"There will come a time," thought he, as the train dashed on.

As for the others, they laughed, shook hands, and congratulated each other on the fiftieth escape, and sank back into their seats in a happy, thankful mood.

But at the next stopping place they all agreed to give Harry a chance to unburden his mind. They argued that he had been carrying that conundrum for two or three weeks and must necessarily feel tired, so when the noise had ceased, Shanks spoke up:

"I say, Harry, what is that conundrum?"

"Ah! Why is Shorty like an oyster?"

"Because he shells out," suggested Gus.

"No."

"Because der's stew of 'em," said the Kid.

"No, they're too raw for a stew."

"Because—oh, confound it, I give it up. Why is he like an oyster?"

"I'll be hanged if I know," said Harry, settling back in his seat.

That time he turned the tables on them completely, and they could but acknowledge it. They didn't bother him any more for some time.

Business wasn't quite so good as it had been, because they were now visiting towns that they had skipped before, and skipped in most instances because they were not first-class show towns; but as a general thing they did well.

They played a week at Pittsburg, Pa., and drew elegant houses, and they gave a grand finish in Baltimore and a final wind up of the season by playing two weeks in Philadelphia, after which they returned to New York, where the combination was broken up, and Shorty's Varieties became a thing of the past, the different members going into different companies, either on the road or located in New York or Boston.

But when Shorty and Shanks came to have a grand figuring up, they found that they had cleared about twenty thousand dollars apiece, besides having one of the most enjoyable times of their whole lives.

Shorty and the Kid went to the Metropolitan Hotel to board, there to wait for the appearance of the old man from whom they had heard once or twice in the meantime, and who was about down now.

"I'll bet it's a bottle of smoke wid der cork out," suggested Shorty, Jr., referring to their respected parent.

"We'll see 'bout dat. But we'll have some fun out of it, eh, anyway, Shanks?" said Shorty, punishing his old partner's ribs.

"I'd like to know how," said Shanks, quietly.

"Never mind, I'll show yer."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of course Shorty could not long remain idle without getting into some mischief, for mischief was just as essential to his existence as breathing was.

Well "fixed," both he and Shanks were just as happy as mortals could be, and as for the Kid, why, he never knew what it was to be anything but happy.

They rode out nearly every day, and as Shorty had purchased a first-class nag and a fancy road wagon, he of course became conspicuous "on the road," and there were but a few who could give him dust.

It was a comical sight to see the little runt bracing up and holding in his horse, and with the Kid by his side, those who met them regarded them as two wild boys who had got possession of somebody's horse and wagon, and were in danger of enjoying a smash-up almost any time.

"Hi g'lang!" he shouted, the first day he was out with his new turnout. "Lemme see how much yer good for."

The horse had lots of "go" in him and was putting it out in good style. He passed team after team on the road, and some of the nags with big records were obliged to take Shorty's dust.

And it made them all as mad as blazes. The idea of being beaten by a "boy" was more than they could stand and be happy.

But Shorty was a good driver and could do just as he had a mind to with his new horse, and was of course ready to "tackle" anything on the road.

"Come an' see me!" he yelled back at one party with a tony turnout whom he had speeded past.

The man was thunderstruck. The idea of being beaten by a couple of boys made him sick, and as he happened to have his girl in the carriage with him, he would have sold out for ten cents on a dollar just then.

Then he overtook another airy rooster with a fancy stepper, who felt very much like having a brush. They were about a mile from McComb's bridge.

"I'll go yer ter de bridge for a bot," said Shorty.

The man looked at him with the most supreme contempt.

"Make it a basket if you say so."

"Sonny, you had better go slow," said the man, after a moment's hesitation.

"Dat's der only way yer can go; g'lang!" and he let out his nag, shooting past the indignant man like a greased arrow. "Come an' see me!" he called back.

"Set yer a bottle or a fifty dat I beat yer out ter Judge Smith's!"

But the challenged party took no notice of him, regarding him as only a boy.

A mounted policeman, however, did take notice of Shorty, for seeing what he regarded as a pair of runaway boys with a fast team, he took it for granted that they had either stolen it or come into possession of it in some crooked way.

So he put spurs to his horse and went for Shorty as fast as he could.

"Here comes der cop," said the Kid.

Shorty glanced over his shoulder, and saw the officer coming after them pell-mell.

"What! If I can't beat dat ole club-swing, I'll shoot der nag. G'lang, Daddy!" and he touched his fastest spot with the whip, causing him to let out like a reindeer.

But Shorty was mistaken about the speed of the police horses, especially when going under a saddle against one in harness, and just before they reached the bridge the officer rode up alongside.

"Race yer for a bottle!" cried Shorty.

"Hold on!" demanded the officer.

"Hold on ter what?"

"Stop that horse!"

"Not much!"

"You'd better!"

"But I can't; Daddy's got his back up!"

The officer again put spurs to his horse, and succeeded in reaching the reins of Shorty's nag, seizing which, he slackened the speed of his own horse, and, of course, quickly brought the other to a stand-still.

"What's der matter?" demanded Shorty.

"I'll soon show you what the matter is. Whose horse is this?"

"Mine."

"You lie!"

"Bet yer a tencer I don't lie."

"Who are you, and where did you get this horse and wagon?"

"Why, I'm Shorty, an' dis is my horse, Daddy. Come out ter der Club House or Judge Smith's if you don't believe it."

The officer looked at him sharply. The idea of his being a boy was abandoned at once, for he saw that he was a decidedly old boy, as the reader knows him to be.

But as the officer's education had been neglected, he had never heard of Shorty, and so he wasn't put off so easily.

"Ride out ter ther judge's, an' get a drink. He knows me."

"All right, but look out; no fooling, or I'll scoop you in, anyway."

"Oh, shoot me if I'm crooked. I'm satisfied. Come on."

"Well, go ahead, and I'll follow," said the officer, releasing the rein.

"Dat's all right. G'lang, Daddy!" and the next minute they were speeding again toward Judge Smith's.

"Oh, I'll work a racket on dat fresh rooster, see 'f I don't!" muttered Shorty.

"Isn't he fresh?" said the Kid.

"I'd give a fifty ter work a job on him," and touched up the nag a little.

Everybody had the laugh on Shorty, and he met several whom he knew, for they saw that he was in the custody of the officer, and had probably been arrested for fast driving.

A ride of about ten minutes brought them to the noted roadside tavern known as Judge Smith's, about a mile beyond the bridge, a place where everybody stops, and it seemed as though "everybody" was there on this occasion, and when they saw Shorty driving up in custody they gave him the laugh.

"Halloo, Shorty!" said Judge Smith. "What's the matter?"

"Well, jedge, dis rooster thinks dat I swiped der nag," said he.

"What!"

"Do you know him, judge?" asked the officer.

"Well, I should say so. He's all right, officer. Why, I thought everybody knew him."

"I thought he was a boy who had stolen the team, or borrowed it for a lark."

"Oh, no; I know all about it."

"Dat makes it all right, cop?"

"Certainly. But you see I was only doing my duty."

"Oh, dat's all right, cop. Come in an' let's have a 'bot' together."

"Well, I'm a little thirsty," said the officer, who was only human, if he did wear a uniform and exercise a little brief authority, and giving his horse to a hostler to water in the meantime, he followed Shorty into the bar-room.

"Open a casket. Daddy's under der shed, and I'm under obligations. Come up, everybody. Trot up yer friends, jedge," said Shorty, standing up in a chair at one end of the bar.

Of course, as nearly everybody knew him, either personally or by reputation, there was soon a long line of handsome, laughing, good-natured men in front of the bar, and a crowd around Shorty and the officer.

Three or four bar-keepers began to make the corks fly at a lively rate, and the toast, "Shorty and his Daddy" was drunk in sparkling "cham."

But Shorty, Jr., was not there. No; he was outside with a hostler, carrying out the racket which he and his father had agreed upon while riding along.

The idea was to get something under the policeman's saddle, while Shorty got something under his hat, and after hunting around for a few moments, he found a good, healthy, ripe chestnut burr, and this was placed under the saddle while the horse was drinking, and then he was led up to the house where his rider was drinking, and there tied to a post to wait.

Meantime the corks were popping in the bar-room, and that policeman was getting something stronger than "pop" under his hat, and plenty of it. Champagne was something that he didn't often get treated to, and he wasn't the kind of an officer that allowed such things to go to waste if he could help it.

The result was that Shorty managed to have a full glass before him just as often as he found it empty, which was about every minute, and in the course of half an hour he was as full as a goat.

"Once more, gents!" said Shorty, holding up his glass. "Here's to our gallant policemen, der finest in der world!"

The toast was drunk, and winks exchanged all around. The officer thought he was in duty bound to make a speech in reply, but he got so badly mixed that he didn't know what he was talking about any more than the crowd did.

But it eventually occurred to him that he had better resume his beat, which lay a couple of miles from where he then was, and so he started, in a rather unsteady manner, for his waiting horse.

"Whoop! Maybe you think I'm drunk," he cried, and, unhitching his horse, he threw himself into the saddle.

He was thrown out just as quick as he threw himself in, for that chestnut burr made things lively.

"Whoop! Maybe you think you're sober," said some one of the crowd who stood around.

The puzzled officer picked himself up, and drawing his locust, offered to club the person till his mother wouldn't know him from a hunk of chuck steak, and do it for nothing, too.

But his offer was declined, and once more he threw himself into the saddle, and once more, also, did the horse "buck" and throw him upon the ground, after which he started down the road toward New York as though the devil was after him.

This time the officer got up with a bloody nose, and looked around in a confused sort of way, just as though he expected somebody was going to tell him what had happened.

"Where's er fight? Who struck me?" he asked, leering around.

"The ground," somebody volunteered to say, and he tried to see who it was, but he was too mixed to see a barn.

"Whoa—whoa, now!" said he, looking around, and reaching out in search of his horse. "Do that ter me 'gin, an' I'll club yer whole head off—hic!"

"Your horse has run away, old man."

"Where is he?"

"Away down by the bridge, yonder. Take a walk after him."

"How'd he get 'way?" he asked, looking around stupidly.

"Ran away."

"W—wh—where wash I?"

"Sampling mud with your nose," said some one, whereat there was a loud laugh.

"Ash funny," he mused. "Gush that slampaigh gosh inter my head," and away he staggered toward New York.

But the grand laugh followed him until he was out of hearing.

And while this was going on, a man had stopped the horse, robbed him of bridle and saddle—greatly to the horse's relief—and turned him adrift again.

Then Shorty told the story of the officer's freshness, and the joke they had played upon him, causing even a louder laugh than before; for up to that time it had been a mystery to them why the horse threw him, unless he was a total abstinence beast.

Well, it was a jolly, old-fashioned hurrah that they had that afternoon, and the little jokers made dozens of friends.

On the way back to New York, Shorty had several brushes with the owners of fast nags, and got away with the most of them without any difficulty, for Daddy was a fast one and no mistake.

On their return to the Metropolitan Hotel, they found that Mr. Burwick had arrived during the afternoon from California, and that Shanks had been entertaining him while awaiting their return.

The meeting between father and son—for father and son they undoubtedly were—was of the most cordial nature, and that evening they dined together in Shorty's parlor, and a pleasant time they had of it.

The next day Shorty took the old gent out on the road for a ride, and if there was any further evidence needed that they were father and son, it was found in the generally expressed opinion:

"There goes father and son."

In fact, Shorty (he will always be called "Shorty" as long as he lives, notwithstanding his name is Harry Burwick) introduced him to all of his acquaintances as his father, whom he had lately and accidentally found.

The next two or three days were spent in following up the old traces of the abandonment of the kid of so many years ago, and of which the reader is well acquainted.

Little by little it was all worked out and made clear to both of them, and it was hard to say which of them was the most delighted when everything was traced out and there was no longer any doubt about it.

And to show how much the old man believed it, he made his will in favor of Shorty and the Kid, (having him christened beforehand, Frank Burwick) leaving the two of them nearly one hundred thousand dollars apiece whenever he should peg out.

But both of the boys, son and grandson, hoped that the old man might live long and prosper, for now that he had found them, and the weight which had borne him down so long and even made a hermit of him had lifted, he began to change for the better, and actually seemed to be growing younger every day.

In fact, Shorty found him more like a companion than a parent, for day by day he grew more and more sociable, and showed that in his younger days and in the absence of all trouble, that he was one of the boys and quite as full of fun as ever Shorty was. In short, three happier persons than they were could not be found in the world, and they were continually in each other's company.

But there is one character who has figured on a great many occasions in connection with Shorty, and who will undoubtedly be well remembered by the reader—Sergeant Polly.

Shorty remembered him, for about the last time he had seen him he had played a little snap upon him by sending him all the way up to Albany with a letter of introduction to an old fellow whom he thought might be his dad, the result of which was that Shorty got fired out, bad.

On his return from California, one of the first persons he thought of was the sergeant, for he knew that he "owed him one," and it was against his principles to owe anyone any longer than he could help.

The sergeant was boarding in a certain house up town, enjoying the dignity of being a contented widower, and Shorty was not long in finding out all about it.

The result was the following advertisement in one of the morning papers:

"WANTED.—A colored woman to sweep and clean a gentleman's room. Ten dollars a week for only an hour's work each day. Apply at No. — Twenty-third street; ring the front door bell, hard, four times, and inquire for
SERGEANT."

The result was quite as much as the little joker could have imagined, for it was scarcely daylight when the wenches began to come and to pull the bell of that boarding-house four times, as though they intended to pull it out by the roots, and to inquire "fo' de surgunt."

The landlady of the house answered the bell, and not being of an angelic turn of mind, she naturally "kicked" at so much "previousness."

The first applicant, however, she treated quite civilly; asked her to wait until she communicated with Sergeant Polly and found out what he had advertised for.

The sergeant was asleep when she rapped on his door, and poking his head out asked her what in — she wanted at that hour.

"The colored woman you advertised for is down stairs," said she.

"Colored thunder! What are you giving me?" growled the sleepy Polly.

"Didn't you advertise for a colored woman?"

"Bah!" he exclaimed, slamming the door in her face and looking it again.

That astonished and wondering landlady retired in good order, but she was mad. She told the colored applicant that it was undoubtedly a mistake, and showed her the door.

In a few moments the bell rang again, and a servant went to the door, only to find another colored applicant for the situation. She told her to wait in the hall, and went up to the sleepy sergeant's room and pounded on the door.

"What in thunder do you want?" roared he.

"Ther nageur wench that ye want is down stairs," said she, with a strong Irish accent.

"Tell her to go to the devil,"

The servant went below and reported according to orders. But the wench wasn't that sort of a cat; she objected to going to the devil, and so she made a kick, and there was a fight in the hall, during which the hat-rack was overturned, and a lively time had generally.

But with the assistance of the landlady and two other servants, the colored applicant was fired out, and harmony temporarily restored, although she at once went for a policeman to get justice.

In the course of five minutes there were four other vigorous pulls at the bell, and the landlady went to see what it meant.

There stood a colored woman.

"Well?"

"Whar am de surgunt, please?"

"Who told you to come here?" she demanded.

"Dis yer advertisement, mum," said she, displaying it to her.

"Wait here a moment," and closing the door, she rushed up to the sergeant's room.

She pounded lustily upon the door.

"What yer want?" came in smothered tones.

"Get up and come down stairs, sir, for I will not be bothered with your wenches."

"Oh, shut up; what do I know about wenches?"

"Well, sir, if you don't get up at once you must leave my house."

"Oh, go to the devil!"

She returned and told the applicant that it was all a mistake, and the sergeant, thinking something was decidedly wrong, soon made his appearance, and by that time three or four others had pulled the bell and been admitted. The second one had also returned with a policeman in the meantime, and there was the wildest old confusion that was ever known in a boarding house. Polly, of course, could not understand it, and explained the best he could to the officer, who cleared out the colored crowd, and peace reigned once more. But in a short time the bell rang again, and the sergeant was once more in demand.

This was too much. Seizing his hat, he rushed from the house.

"I'll bet five dollars that Shorty is in town again," he muttered, as he started down town.

CHAPTER XXX.

"YES," muttered Sergeant Polly, as he walked down town, "I'll bet a fiver that that cussed Shorty is in town. For who else under Heaven would have thought of putting up such a job on me? I'd rather have given a hundred dollars than to be set up for this, for all my friends will be sure to hear about it, and then, oh! the guying I'll get. Yes, I'm fully convinced that Shorty is in town, and I'll just nose around a little and see if I am not right. He owes me one for the little games I have played on him, and that makes me certain, almost, that he is in town."

And he was right about the trouble and guying that the racket which had been played upon him would engender, for the colored women continued to call on his poor landlady until she had to seek the protection of the police, one of whom was stationed in front of her house to turn away any further applicants for the situation.

But the officer took in the situation; while explaining that there was some mistake about the advertisement, he informed them that Mr. Polly could undoubtedly explain the matter if they called upon him at the station house where he was detailed, and so dozens of them went there to interview him, and a few buck niggers, who took up for the deluded women, also went to demand satisfaction.

They got it, for the sergeant swings a nasty club. Yes, they got all the satisfaction they wanted.

And when the sergeant reached his boarding-house that evening, he found his landlady in high dudgeon, and he was at once ordered from her house, and he might think himself lucky that she did not sue him for damages besides.

Poor Polly!

But that really was not the worst of it, for some enterprising reporter got hold of it that same afternoon, and worked it up in a most humorous way for the *Evening Telegram*, giving the whole affair.

And then the whole police force had it on him, and his friends everywhere were guying him until life became a burden and official dignity a mockery.

"Oh, if I only find that Shorty is in town, I'll go for him, anyway; I'll go for him on principle, for he's a cuss anyhow and deserves clubbing," growled he.

Well, as he threatened, he did nose around, and the result was that he found that Shorty was in town, and stopping at the Metropolitan Hotel.

"Now, what ought I to do?" he mused. "If it was him, and I'd almost swear it, if I go and accuse him of it, he'll laugh me out of it in spite of my indignation. What can I do to get even with the little rascal?" and he pondered on the subject for some time.

Finally he concluded to set a detective to watch him, and it was not long before he found that the little joker was still up to his old tricks again, and was just as full of the devil as ever.

So he gave the detective orders to keep a bright lookout for him, and to "snatch" him into the station-house on the slightest occasion that would justify locking him up.

The officer had but little to do, and did not have to wait long, for in a day or two afterwards he caught Shorty playing some of his funny business on an old apple woman not far from the hotel, and even before he had committed any breach of the law in reality, the detective collared him and hurried him to the station-house, followed by the old woman and a crowd of idlers.

Sergeant Polly was at the desk when Shorty was brought in, but he pretended not to know him at all.

"Halloo, sarge!" shouted Shorty.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Polly severely.

"Don't you know me, sarge?"

"No, sir; and I'm glad I do not, for you are a bad-looking character. What is the charge, officer?" he added, opening the "blotter" to take down the statement.

Shorty was paralyzed.

In the first place he would willingly have given the old Irish woman ten dollars, or three times what her whole stock was worth, just for the little fun he intended to have with her, and when he was snatched so suddenly, it rather took him aback.

"Now look here, sarge—"

"Shut up, sir! Officer, proceed."

"Well, sir, he attempted to rob this poor old apple woman."

"Faith, he did, yer honor," put in the old woman, who had followed in the hope of making something out of the matter, leaving her "ould man" to tend the "store" during her absence.

"Be quiet, will you?" said the detective, turning to her.

"Oh, me foine apples! Worra—worra, is there no justice for a dacint woman in this country?" she moaned.

"Well, proceed, officer. Did you catch him in the act?"

"I did."

"What was he doing?"

"He went along to her stand, and taking up three or four of her apples, he began tossing them up into the air, and catching them as they came down."

"Oh, me foine apples!" moaned the old woman.

"Shut up, I tell you."

"Well, what was he saying?"

"Something like—now you see 'em, ole gal, an' now you don't; trying to fool her and confuse her so that he might get some of them into his pocket."

"Undoubtedly."

"It's the Lord's truth he's tellin' ye, yer honor," put in the old woman, while poor Shorty was all broken up.

"I have often seen fellows like him doing the same thing," added the detective.

"Yes, it's an old game. What's your name, prisoner?" demanded the sergeant.

"Sarge, yer know my name," said Shorty, after a moment's hesitation.

"No, sir, I never saw you before. What is your name?"

"Harry Burwick," replied Shorty.

"What?"

"Dat's my name, ole man."

"No lying here."

"I'll be hanged if I want ter lie here," said Shorty.

"What alias do you go by?"

"I used ter be called Shorty, an' yer know it very well, ole man."

"No familiarity, if you please, Harry Burwick, alias Shorty," said the sergeant, pretending to write in the blotter.

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-five, I guess," and Shorty began to look serious.

"Where were you born?"

"In New York."

"Read and write?"

"Some."

"Stand aside. Come up here, old lady," he added, addressing the apple woman. "What is your name?"

"Bridget O'Hoolihan, yer honor."

"Where do you live?"

"In Crosby street, sur."

"What is your business?"

"Sure, me an' me ould man kape a little store down here beyant, where we do sell fruit an' such loike."

"Do you accuse the prisoner of trying to steal from you?"

"Oh, me foine apples, yer honor! Sure, he comed along, an' says he:

"'Ould woman,' says he, 'how der yer sell 'em?'"

"'Two for foive cints,' says I."

"'I'll take a barrel,' says he."

"'No yer won't,' says I."

"'Why not?' says he."

"'Because I haven't 'em,' says I; 'an' wid that he raised up two or three in each hand, an' began a-chuckin' 'em up in the air an' a-catchin' 'em one after the other as they came down, an' a-sayin' as how that I see 'em an' I didn't, an' I thought he was a-foolin' loike until the officer grabbed him, an' then I was sure he was a thafe.'"

"Do you wish to prefer charges against him?"

"Faix, that all depends."

"Depends upon what?"

"How much he'll give me not ter. Sure, I'm a poor hard-workin' woman, an' if he'll give me ten dollars for the beautiful apples he war a-goin' ter hook, I'll say no more about it, so I won't."

Shorty laughed heartily.

"Silence, prisoner! Take him down-stairs, door-man."

"But I tell yer I didn't do nuffin'," said Shorty.

"Take him away."

"I'll give her ten dollars."

"I'll take it," said the woman, eagerly.

"No you won't. Take him away."

"I say, sarge, is dis a racket?"

"Give me ten dollars," moaned the old lady.

"All right for you, sarge. I'll get good an' square for this," said Shorty, as the door-man led him away.

"Oh, me poor apples an' me ten dollars!" whined Mrs. O'Hoolihan.

"You go back to your store, and come here in an hour."

"Worra—worra! I'll niver see me ten dollars. Sure there's no justice at all—at all for a poor woman in this country. Why didn't ye let him give me satisfaction?"

"You come back in an hour, and I'll see that you have satisfaction," said Polly.

And the old woman retired, growling and bewailing her luck.

Shorty was placed in a cell and locked in, utterly crushed and bewildered, for the idea of Polly's refusing to recognize him made him feel as though he had found out about the advertising trick, and was bound to get even with him for it.

But it so happened that his father and the Kid were away somewhere together, and nobody but Shanks knew of the affair.

And he saw how the thing was working against Shorty, and that it would do no good to expostulate with the sergeant in command, for he was undoubtedly only getting square for the colored woman racket, and Shorty's only hope was that the magistrate would discharge him in the morning.

No sooner was Shorty and the mob cleared out than Sergeant Polly began to give vent to his feelings in loud and continued laughter. He worked the cards so nice that he got the little joker under lock and key at last, and that made amends for everything. He had got the grand laugh on Shorty now, and he felt enough better to forgive everything.

After keeping him locked up for about half an hour, he sent the door-man to bring him up to the captain's private office, that officer having arrived, and been let into the little racket.

Shorty appeared, looking decidedly down in the mouth.

Polly and the captain were laughing heartily as he was shown in.

"Well, Shorty, how do you feel now?" asked Polly.

"Feel sick. I say, sarge, what sort of a racket do yer call this?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, no racket at all. Nothing near so good as advertising for colored help," said he, looking sharply at Shorty.

"Sarge, I weaken," said he.

"You do? And do you own up?"

"Own up ter what?"

"That advertising racket."

"Me?"

"Yes; own up, or down you go again to stay all night, and to the Tombs in the morning, sure."

"Well—"

"Well?"

"Der yer remember der jobs yer put up on me?"

"That settles it. You acknowledge?"

Shorty grinned one of his peculiar grins, which Polly knew so well.

"Will yer shake hands on it, sarge?"

"Yes, but if you ever play another such a scaly game on me, I'll put up a job that will send you to the Island."

"All right, shake."

"There's my hand," said Polly, catching the little fellow with a hearty grip.

"Good enough. Come out an' have a bot, you an' der cap. Come on, I've got a bushel ter tell yer; I've found my dad."

"The devil you have!"

"Fact. Found him out in California. Rich as mud. Come up an' see him. He's one of der nicest old roosters yer ever saw. Why, he's one of der gang," said he, with enthusiasm.

"Well—well, that beats me. So you have really found your father?"

"Sure pop."

"No mistake about it?"

"Not a cent's worth. All straight as a gun. Come up an' be introduced."

"And his name is Burwick?"

"Dat's his name. Come up to der hotel an' I'll tell yer all 'bout it. Come on."

At that moment Mrs. O'Hoolihan put in an appearance.

"How 'bout me beautiful—"

"Oh, here; give her a tenner, sarge, for it's a cheap racket at that price," said Shorty, interrupting, and handing him a ten.

"All right. Now, Mrs. O'Hoolihan, if you ever catch this fellow around your fruit 'store' again, you just let him do whatever he likes, for he is good for a ten every time," said he, handing her the bill.

"Heaven bless yer honor. Sure he may clane out

the whole store, if he loikes, if he'll give me ten dollars. Faith, he's a foine little man, so he is. May he have good luck."

"That's all right. Go now."

She didn't have to be told twice, and with a heart almost bursting with her good luck, she returned to her apple stand, and proceeded to bully her "ould man," after which she got drunk, and kicked the apple-stand into the street, and was locked up for disorderly conduct.

Meantime, Shorty and Sergeant Polly returned to the Metropolitan Hotel, where they found the old gent, the Kid, and Shanks, and after introductions were had they proceeded to discuss matters over a bottle of wine, and to laugh at the two latest rackets that had been played on each other.

It was, after all, one of the most enjoyable reunions in the world, for four of them had been so long associated together that they seemed like brothers to each other, and like children to the old man, who had shaken off so much of his reserve that he showed unmistakably that he was Shorty's father.

And from that hour they all became the firmest of friends, and lunched or drove out together nearly every day.

But of course it would be utterly impossible for either Shorty or the Kid to get along without playing a practical joke now and then on somebody, and, as a natural consequence, the old gentleman came in for one occasionally as well as anybody else, for Shorty always said:

"What's der use of havin' a dad, if yer can't have some fun with him?"

And the old fellow took it all in good part, that is, if he found out who it was who played the jokes on him, and he also manifested a disposition to keep his end up at the fun, frequently playing jokes on his son and grandson, which pleased them quite as much as it did him. In fact, three jollier, merrier, mellow people never lived together than they were.

The old man, however, was getting on in years, and loved his ease and his easy chair more than his sons did, of course, and it was to this easy chair that they on one occasion paid their particular attention.

It was a rich, soft, yielding affair, and the happy old man used to have many a snooze in its lazy embrace; and one day, for the want of something better to do, and while the old man was out riding with Shanks, they ripped open the upholstery in some way, and arranged a needle on the inside so as to be entirely out of sight and feeling, save when the cushion was forced down quite a way, when it would surely be felt if not seen by the person sitting down in it.

Well, the old gent returned from his ride, and after they had all eaten dinner, they retired to their rooms and he threw himself into his favorite arm chair with a bounce.

And he bounced out with a degree of agility that was really surprising, at the same time uttering a loud exclamation, and rubbing the seat of his trousers vigorously.

"What's der matter, dad?" asked Shorty.

"Hang me if I know," said he, running his hand carefully over the cushion, but of course finding nothing in the least suspicious.

"Hurt you?"

"Well, I think so. Either something pricked me or I got a rheumatic twinge, hang me if I know which."

Once more he sat down. This time more cautiously, and consequently he did not force the needle up through the upholstery.

"Rheumatism, I guess," he muttered, "but it was an awful keen twinge. Lord, how it smarts!" and he got up again for the purpose of rubbing himself.

"Have her that way often?" asked the Kid.

"No, not very often," replied the old man, and again he threw himself down into the chair.

Up he came again, even quicker than before, and he danced around the room for several minutes, saying all sorts of things that are not found in Sunday school books, and finally the two little rascals began to laugh.

"Have you two mischiefs been playing any jokes on me?" he asked, finally.

"We?" they both asked, in astonishment.

"Oh, all right, I suspect that you have. At all events, I shall send the chair to an upholsterer to-morrow, and let him see what the matter is with it," and with a suspicious smile on his face, he took another chair.

But Shorty, Jr., was on hand when the man came to take the chair away, and by bribing him, managed so that his grandfather never knew what it was that had made him get up out of his comfortable seat so quickly; whether it was a sharp twinge of the rheumatism or the sharp point of a needle.

But here I am, at the end of my story. We have had lots of fun in Shorty's company, and have followed him from the Atlantic to the Pacific in search of his father. We have seen him in all sorts of scrapes and wild adventures, and seen him safely, joyfully through with all of them; his hopes all realized, his future secured; and as what might befall him afterwards would most likely be only a repetition of what has already happened, we may as well part with him just here, and let him go on enjoying himself in his own way.

Yet we can but feel that, from first to last, he has been a hero and a favorite. And now let us all shake hands—shake with Shorty, Shorty, Jr., and Shorty's Dad.

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